

ANNE SCHRAFF

when  
sleeping  
dogs  
awaken

**PAGETURNERS®**

# chapter 1

**T**anner Brice liked the room he'd set up for himself. It was actually a spare room in his mom and stepdad's apartment. The family had once used it for storage.

The space was tiny. But it was his. That was important to Tanner. It was better than having to share a bedroom with his half-brother. Damon was an annoying kid. The fourteen-year-old was just like Tanner's stepdad, Floyd. The two even looked alike. They were both short and muscular. Just the opposite of Tanner and his father. The truth was Tanner had never liked Damon or Floyd.

Mom had married Floyd Richards just

nine months after Dad died. He'd been killed in a hit-and-run accident when he was only four. When he got a little older, Tanner had begun to wonder why his mom would remarry so soon. It had seemed a little suspicious.

What was it about Floyd that appealed so much to mom? Or had Floyd worked his way into Mom's life for a reason other than love? Tanner didn't trust the man.

Floyd was nothing like Tanner's father. Tanner remembered his dad as being a kind man and a good father. His dad was also good-looking. Tall and well-built. His eyes were dark brown. And he had a great smile. Tanner kept a photo of his father on his dresser.

Dad had worked hard for a living. Floyd was a scammer. He'd said his job was in sales. But the products he sold weren't from stores. They were ordered online. There were things like diet pills and cleaning supplies. Tanner wondered if they might even be fake.

He'd looked at some of the labels once. The expiration dates had passed.

It was embarrassing the way Floyd would try to get the neighbors involved. He'd ask them to be part of his business schemes. They'd have to hold parties and sell the products to people they knew. There was little in it for them. Floyd kept most of the money.

Tanner had never felt part of his new family. And he couldn't wait to be out on his own. First he had to finish school. He'd nearly completed a two-year auto repair program at the community college. His grades had been good. And his instructors were impressed with his skills. He could make good money as a mechanic.

After he got his certificate, he could get his own apartment. He'd already saved some money from his part-time job at a place that did oil changes.



Tanner was on his way out the door. That's

when he heard his mom and stepdad talking in the bedroom.

“You look so beautiful this morning,” Floyd was saying.

The sound of his voice made Tanner sick. What did his mother see in that man? Tanner had always been a little angry at her for marrying him. How could she have settled for such a loser? Especially after being married to a good man like his dad.

“Come on, Floyd,” Mom said. “I have to get dressed for work.”

She was a checker at a grocery store. The job didn’t pay well. But she still brought home more money than Floyd, even with all his businesses.

“But I don’t want to let you go,” Floyd said. “Can’t you stay here with me today?”

The way he said it sounded so sleazy. But his stepdad was right about one thing. Mom *was* beautiful. And she looked much younger than her age. People seeing

them out together often thought she was Tanner's older sister. It made him feel proud.

Mom was flirting back with Floyd. "Oh, come on," she said. "We've been together for eighteen years. You're telling me that I'm still that attractive to you?"

The words *eighteen years* had caught Tanner's attention. They couldn't have been together that long. His father had died sixteen years ago. Mom had always said she'd met Floyd *after* Dad died. Unless that had been a lie.

The story Tanner had been told was that Floyd sold life insurance back then. Before his death, Tanner's dad had bought some insurance. Then Dad died. And Mom had to meet with Floyd to get the money. That's what brought them together. They started dating soon after.

Now it seemed there was a whole different story. Mom may have known Floyd while

Dad was still living. What was that about? The thought was making Tanner mad. It only added to his suspicions.

“Damon,” Mom called. “We need to get going. Finish your breakfast and get ready for school. You don’t want to be late again, do you?”

“Yeah,” Floyd said. “Didn’t you get locked out of a class the last time you were late?”

“Getting locked out of history is always a good thing,” Damon said. He grabbed his backpack and went outside.

Damon and Floyd had now both left the house. Tanner and his mom were alone in the kitchen.

“Mom,” Tanner said. “How long did you and Floyd know each other before you got married?”

She set her coffee cup on the counter. “You know the answer to that, Tanner. We’ve talked about it. I met Floyd after your father died. He was the one who handled

your dad's insurance. What does it matter after all these years?"

"I just heard you say that you and Floyd have known each other for eighteen years. But Dad was still alive then," Tanner said. "Did you know Floyd before Dad was killed?"

"Oh, Tanner," Mom said with a sigh. "I just misspoke. I'm not sure where this is coming from. But you're worrying for nothing."

Tanner wasn't convinced. His mother was putting up a good front. But he could swear that she was hiding something. Maybe she'd been hiding it for eighteen years.

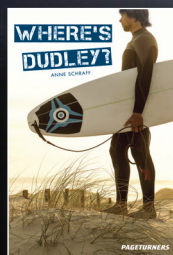
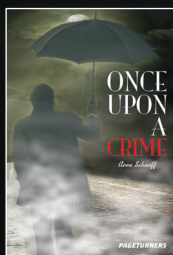


**PAGETURNERS®** | MYSTERY

# when sleeping dogs awaken

Tanner Brice has always resented his stepfather. But is that any reason to suspect the man of murder? When Tanner asks a powerful man to help him investigate his father's death, he finds out that appearances can be deceiving.

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# WHERE'S DUDLEY?

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**T**ony Young had spent all morning attending college classes. And he worked the rest of the day at the campus bookstore. He had just gotten home. Before he could change clothes, his phone rang. It was Brandi Ketchum. She was in his world history class.

“Tony, it’s Brandi. I’m calling about what happened in history class this morning.” She sounded scared. “You can’t tell anyone about it. Especially the police. They might come to see you. Don’t say anything if they do.”

“What?” Tony said. “What are you talking about, Brandi?”

“I have to go. Just don’t say anything about what happened in Mr. Dudley’s class.” She hung up.

Tony thought about calling her back. But then he figured it must have been some kind of joke. As he changed clothes, he thought back to Mr. Dudley's class that morning. Nothing unusual happened. It was the same boring routine.

Mr. Dudley gave his lecture. And the students listened. Or pretended to. The lectures normally weren't about world history. They were more about Dudley's history. Stories about the hard life he'd had. Experiences in the war. And his travels around the world.

There was no real interaction with his students. He didn't tolerate any talking during his lectures. The slightest whisper would make him mad. And Dudley talked down to his students. He treated them as if they were young children. He didn't give them any respect. It was no wonder the kids in his class didn't respect him.

Then there were the tests. Unlike the

lectures, the tests *were* on world history. And they were tough. The students didn't get the information from Dudley. They had to rely on reading the book. But it was anybody's guess whether they had studied the right material.

Now Tony wondered what he missed in today's class. Something must have happened to upset Brandi so much. Again, he thought back. Their tests had been returned. Tony was happy with his C. But he did notice that a lot of students were complaining about their grades.

Just before Tony left class, he saw several students crowded around Dudley's desk. They seemed to be arguing with him. But then Tony left. Maybe the argument got out of hand. Brandi made it sound like something bad had happened. Had someone gotten hurt? He couldn't worry about it. Whatever happened was over now.

Tony texted his girlfriend. "Pick you up

in an hour.” They had plans to get a bite to eat after Dawna got off work.

Dawna Reston had been going to college when the two met. She was a freshman and Tony was a junior. But then she dropped out. She decided to study cosmetology instead. After only eight months she got her license. Now she was working at a hair salon.

Tony liked the fact that Dawna was both beautiful and athletic. She was fun to be with. The two of them had so much in common. Both of them loved to run and go hiking. When Tony told her he surfed, she asked him to teach her. He was happy to do it. He'd been surfing since he was a kid.

There was one thing they didn't have in common. Dawna was always talking about getting married. It wasn't something Tony wanted to do. At least not any time soon.



At the restaurant, Dawna was talking about

a video she'd seen online. "There were these cats—" she started to say.

Tony interrupted her. "Not another cat video," he said, smiling.

"But it's so funny. Here, I'll show you." She pulled her phone out of her purse.

"That's okay. If you've seen one cat video, you've seen them all." He was laughing. But then he looked at her. She made a sad face. Next she'd probably start crying. She would get like that when he did something that hurt her feelings. It was one of the things that kept him from wanting to get closer to her. She was moody.

"Let's go to the beach on Saturday," he said, trying to change the subject.

"Maybe," she said.

"Okay," he said. "I'll watch the cat video."

Dawna smiled.



Tony hadn't thought any more about

Brandi's call or Mr. Dudley. Until now. It was Wednesday and time for history class. As he sat down at a desk, he realized that Dudley wasn't there. Brandi caught his eyes. She gave him a worried look and shrugged her shoulders.

After a few minutes of waiting, most of the students walked out. A few were gathered around a laptop, watching a video on World War II. They were the *good* students. Dudley's favorites.

"I wonder where the man is," Tony said to Chaz Spender, the guy sitting next to him.

"Weren't you here Monday?" he asked.

"Yeah. I was here," Tony said. "So?"

"Come on. Let's go. I'll fill you in," Chaz said.

"I'm surprised you didn't hear about it," Chaz said when he and Tony were outside. "Three students got into a big fight with Dudley. It was that guy named Mac and Brandi and her friend Lisa.



“They flunked the latest test,” Chaz said. “Mac called Dudley a senile old man. He told Dudley he shouldn’t be teaching anymore. Then Brandi and Lisa joined in. Brandi told Dudley to drop dead. And Lisa told him he’d be doing everyone a favor.”

“I didn’t hear any of that,” Tony said. “I must have left by then. What did Dudley say?”

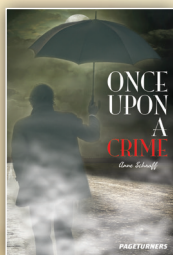
“There wasn’t much he could say with all the shouting. But I could tell he was furious. He said something about calling security and left. The last I saw, he was heading toward the parking lot. Brandi, Lisa, and Mac were following him. I’m not sure why. And when I saw Brandi later on, she looked really scared.”

**PAGETURNERS®** | MYSTERY

# WHERE'S DUDLEY?

Super-critical professor Walter Dudley should have retired long ago. Everyone hates his history class. But even his unhappiest students wouldn't have done him any harm ... or would they? Tony Young resolves to find out what really happened to the cranky old man.

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