



AILANTHUS

NIGHTMARES AND CRIMES

ANTONIO DE VITO



Stacie had been in the Oncology Hospital of Geneva for two weeks, where she and Sam had put their hopes and dreams of life together. Stacie had absolutely no difficulty in persuading him to follow her. She had flaunted with all her strength, security and decision and Sam had chosen to grab the last thing he had left behind: Stacie's love.

Although both of them had left for Geneva with the awareness that it would not be a simple challenge, they had not considered that it would be time to separate, a devastating moment for both of them. Stacie realized that perhaps that greeting before Sam entered the operating room could be the last gesture that made sense. Sam realized that despite all that they had been saying so far, his life, their destiny, would no longer depend on their will from that moment. They said goodbye to each other with the saddest of kisses, but it was natural. Hope remained. A desire to get together again remained.

Exhausted by stress, Stacie let herself fall into the seat in the waiting room and, for a moment, she felt like forgetting everything as if nothing had ever happened. There were a few but very pleasant moments in which every feeling of fear vanished, concealed by others never felt before. It was only for a few moments. Then, uncontrollable noises and amplified and incomprehensible sounds, as if produced by an old gramophone, gave Stacie a wake-up call.

She got up from her chair and tried to figure out what or who was making those noises. She glanced around herself and there, where she had just tried to rest a few moments, now there was only her chair in the middle of the room. The floor was covered with sheets of paper, and at each step, she could hear them crackling under her feet. She leaned down and took one of

them to try to figure out why all those sheets were on the floor. There was an inscription. She immediately took another one and then another one. All with the same sentence,

“I better get a move on. Sam”.

Stacie ran to the door and, before she could grab the knob, she opened the door outwards, opening it to a dark corridor.

She had a moment of hesitation; she did not know whether to move on or not. As she was trying to make a decision on what to do, Sam’s voice came from down the hall.

“Stacie, don’t move; I’ll come to you.”

Stacie did not understand the meaning of what was going on. Sam was in surgery and could not be down the hall.

“Stacie, don’t move; I’ll come to you.”

Stacie kept hearing that phrase repeated and began to fidget because she could not see Sam but she could hear his voice. So she screamed at the top of her lungs and in that moment, she opened her eyes and woke up from the nightmare she had rushed in. Everything was back in its place. The other seats, the magazine cabinet, the beverage dispenser. On the floor, there was no trace of sheets. Stacie was soaked, for how upset she was.

She immediately ran for the door to obtain information on the success of the surgery Sam had undergone. As she was about to grab the knob, the door opened again outward just as before. Stacie’s face fell. She felt like she was falling into a nightmare again. This time there was a doctor on the other side and he was asking for her.

Sadly he did not seem to have good news. His face was speaking for itself. Stacie immediately knew what had happened and before the doctor could complete all the explanations, she avoided him with a low head and ran out of that room into tears.

The story between Sam and Stacie ended here. It remained only the memory of so many years of dreams and shared hopes and the interrupted desire of starting again together. Sam had loved her so much to get away from her when he had realized he was too ill to hope for a future together. He had preferred to get away from the woman he loved rather than be loved for his suffering.

Stacie had suffered his departure, disguised as abandonment, but then she had been able to appreciate Sam's gesture so much that she had loved him even more than before, since the moment they had found themselves again.

All their hopes were dissolved in that Hospital in Geneva, so far from Colorado, from those places that for many years had been silent witnesses to their love story.

Stacie also had to face the sad ritual of the funeral. The presence of Sam's mother, who she had promptly called, was not comforting her. Annie, who had come from Colorado, had brought with her all the pain of an American mother who had left her 18-year-old son to go to study and had found him on a bed of a butcher a few years later without even being able to say goodbye to him.

It was early in the morning on Bedford Avenue and a curious mass crowded the perimeter delineated by the police's yellow tape. The scene was macabre and people's curiosity became morbid. A man had been dragged out from his car through the window. He was still hanging in half from the door and on the floor there was a huge blood pool gushed from his throat clearly torn apart right off.

Another macabre particular made the crowd cringe. The victim's right eye had been gouged out the orbit. The people seemed more horrified by this particular than by the murder itself.

The police had been called by an anonymous number. They had come running without knowing what sight they would have had to witness.

Sergeant Berrimow directed the first operation on the crime scene. Even to Frank that scene had a definitely strong impact, although the experience on the De Sena case was still carved in his mind.

Frank Berrimow had spent two weeks in hospital before totally recovering, after the incident in Fort Tryon Park. That story left him in legacy an ugly scar under his right shoulder, but also a promotion to the grade of Sergeant and the relocation to the *Detective Bureau*. Now he was dealing with murders and his boss was Jack Folasky. He didn't regret Cross. Folasky seemed to believe in him much more than Cross had done in the past. Frank, for this reason, was really enthusiastic about his new assignment.

The images of that awful crime made him immediately pay the thought to Stacie Scott. Frank wished that she was coming back to New York as soon as possible. He couldn't know what had happened in Switzerland and he couldn't imagine in what conditions she would have come back.

Finished the Preliminaries and fenced off the area to avoid that the curious would interfere with the investigations, Frank left the operation's control to his coworker Michael Pet and went to the headquarter, the One Police Plaza, to refer to his boss Jack Folasky. Frank wanted to understand if that brutal crime, committed in the neighborhood of Flatbush, could be the prelude of something worse. Also, he was worrying about Stacie's extended absence and whether that murder could be assigned to another attorney because of territoriality matters. If it was like that, Stacie had no chance to follow that case.

“Jack, what I saw it's incredible. That man was pulled out the window of his car with an inconceivable violence and had his throat cut clean. Also there's the matter that concerns the ferocity with which the murderer went after the body. I'm worried that we should expect some other murderers.”

Jack Folasky was the head of the Detective Bureau from more than two years. He found in his cup of coffee, always on his desk, every answer when it was time to receive some. Even if it wasn't normal in that environment, he hated the smoke and because of this, his guys before getting in his room always checked one another. He was more than fifty years old but he was looking good.

“Frank, how long have you been here at the Detective Bureau?”
Meanwhile, he was tinkering his bonsai with a tweezers and a magnifying glass.

“For about three months, Boss.”

“Maybe this is the reason why what you've seen seems incredible to you. But what you said it's true. A scene like the one you described to me makes me think of a psycho. There's not much to relax about.”

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