



# AILANTHUS

NIGHTMARES AND CRIMES

ANTONIO DE VITO



**Antonio De Vito**  
**Ailanthus**

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Nightmares and Crimes

2nd episode of the series

CRIME IN NEW YORK

To my wife Stefania

who helped me to pull some threads together in this novel.

Any resemblance to persons or actual events is purely coincidental.

Backstory

In the first episode *“Doubts from the past”*, Stacie Scott lives a very delicate stage of her life. Her relationship with Sam, with whom she has lived together for the last seven years, ending the studies together, abruptly interrupts. She struggles to get up and restart without him a brilliant career as a lawyer first and as a journalist then, after moving to the Big Apple. The steady growth of Stacie’s professional life continues until she begins to work for the District Attorney of New York City: Douglas. Her achievements serve to hide the big inner hole left by Sam’s sudden departure. Stacie begins to deal with a case of a missing-person. A young woman, Carla De Sena, also a lawyer, disappears without leaving a trace.

Meanwhile, Sam, who is also in New York, meets Carla and begins dating her. Unfortunately, she will prove to be obsessed with a possessive jealousy. When she has a feeling that Sam could get away from her, she tries to kill him.

With the help of the police, Stacie finds Sam just in time to save his life.

After this adventure, the two lovers will have the opportunity to put the past behind them and return to live together, until...

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## Prologue

It was deep night, almost dawn and the lights of the city fairly illuminated the streets. The headlights of the few cars still around fought through the streets in the Flatbush district, in the heart of Brooklyn. A black Corvette, so much brilliantly beautiful and flashy that alone could give light to alleyways and palaces, was going fast near the Brooklyn Center Cinema. By that time the theater had already closed the doors and the over one thousand people who had been there until a few hours earlier had already left that place. Immediately after the theater, a traffic light, careless of late hours, gave the red signal to the Corvette. The driver, though irritated by having to stop his run, pushed the brake pedal and stopped the car. In the meantime, he lit up a cigarette and rolled down the window to let out the smoke. With the fingers of his left hand he nervously drummed on the car roof, while with the right hand he was bringing the cigarette to the mouth. A noise on his left attracted his attention, just as the long-awaited green light was about to reappear at the traffic lights. First, he looked into the rearview mirror, then into the side-view mirror to his left, but he saw nothing. So he leaned his

head out of the car. But as soon as he was out of the window, two arms clasped his neck tight and, before he could whine, a blade cut his throat sharply.

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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,

â##I better get a move on. Samâ##.

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, Samâ##s voice came from down the hall.

â##Stacie, donâ##t move; Iâ##ll come to you.â##

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

â##Stacie, donâ##t move; Iâ##ll come to you.â##

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.

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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.

Boss, do you think that this murder is in Prosecutor Douglas's responsibility? Well, it's Brooklyn's?

Don't worry; I know you hope to work again with Stacie Scott. Douglas is now Prosecutor of New York Southern District. There won't be any territorial incompatibility. The bigger problem for the moment is Stacie Scott's forced absence. We all hope that she'll come back soon, in full of her abilities.

Frank Berrimow went confidently out of Folasky's room

sharing the same hope about Stacie's rapid return.

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Stacie, leaving Annie still in Switzerland for the last paperwork, got the first flight to New York. She faced her plane trip in a state of agitation. She hadn't plan to go back home alone. She didn't even think that there by her side, for all those hours, she couldn't squeeze Sam's hand. Yet that was the way things were. Stacie would have hated that plane for the rest of her life.

The flight, though, was long and Stacie after one hour spent flipping through a couple magazines, of the ones that you can usually find on a plane, tried to relax slightly reclining the seat. It didn't take long until she fell asleep. The captain of the plane's voice, that kept repeating to the passengers about the weather conditions, the plane's speed and many other information that were considered essential, cradled her. She was exhausted, and the glass of prosecco given to her just before by the hostess, gave her the final blow.

*Stacie, don't move; I'll come to you.*

Sam, tell me that it was just a nightmare. I'm feeling awful. How can I get home by myself? Stacie started to sweat again and the plane's seat had almost completely stretched out horizontally. Stacie didn't have control of her arms and legs anymore and couldn't get back up. Big pearls of sweat continued to line her face down until wetting her hair, while her fingernails were marking the seat's leather. Then she felt

herself shaking repeatedly until, finally, she opened her eyes.

“Ma’am, are you feeling good? I’ve noticed that you’re really nervous and you’re sweating a lot.”

“You’re right. I’m not feeling good at all. Could you bring me a glass of water, please?”

Stacie had regained consciousness, but a feeling of angst was still inside her. That nightmare had shaken her and left a sense of inquietude because she couldn’t interpret the words that Sam had pronounced many times.

This time the shot was tough to absorb. Stacie already managed to take back her life in little time when Sam had gone away leaving her without a reason, but this time there was no pride or sense of payback to make her reaction trigger. This time a huge sense of void denied her the right of react.

The arrival in New York was a release. That flight had been terrible. Although she repeatedly tried, she couldn’t sleep a wink. As soon as she could, exhausted by the tiredness, the nightmares took over.

Maybe going back home would have helped her to start again. She didn’t even know what to expect because she was missing from many weeks now and she couldn’t predict how it would be to build up her life again for the second time.

Her apartment in Madison Street seemed more cold than usual. Her extended absence had contributed to make that place even more desolated. It wouldn’t be enough to buy some more cacti or change the curtains’ texture. That flat couldn’t do

justice to the flow of feelings suffocated in Stacie's soul and that only Sam, until then, could pull out.

She took her jacket off and went towards the pantry. She looked for the first bottle of red wine that came her way and, after uncorking it she literally dived into it with all her thoughts. She would have wanted to drown in it.

She woke up some hours later, more tired and woozy than before because of the wine she had drunk. She tried to get up, and although it was already night, she went to take a shower. She would have tried anything to wash away that hospital stink that she could smell on her skin. But it wouldn't be enough diving into the water, because Stacie was carrying that smell inside.

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Right after 7:00 A.M, Stacie decided to go out and look for a Starbucks. Maybe a coffee would have revived her. She hadn't sleep at all and keeping her eyes open was a real challenge. She was meaning to go to the District Attorney's office and have a chat with Prosecutor Douglas. She couldn't and wouldn't hide her state of mind and hoped that Douglas was willing to give her a chance.

She slowly drank her coffee trying to get slowly back in her shoes. A multitude of thoughts and images went through her mind before her eyes. She didn't cry but, maybe, just because she didn't have any tears left.

The Starbucks was already quite crowded at that time and Stacie tried to look around to observe people's faces. She

really liked it. Sometimes she dwelled so much, risking being even misunderstood. She liked finding details, analyzing the uniqueness. Often, even simple moves captured her attention. This habit distracted her and deflected her thoughts from the daily routine. This time she needed a huge concentration exercise, but her commitment was very laudable.

She went to the DA's office by cab; it was only a few miles far from there and, once reached her destination, she went almost running towards Timothy Douglas's office.

Stacie! You have no idea how much seeing you in this office fills me up with joy. First of all, how was Switzerland?

Unfortunately Sam didn't make it. I'm here about this, too. I know that it's more than two months that I'm away. I don't expect any special treatment and I don't think that you could afford such a low-efficient coworker... Stacie started off like a shot. She didn't even look the Prosecutor straight in his eyes. It was the only way. On the other hand, she didn't release the frustration since the moment when the doctor had stated Sam's death to her.

Keep calm; let's have a seat, so you can tell me what happened. Douglas was extremely understanding, like a father. They sat close for almost one hour. He poured her a cup of coffee and Stacie could tell him everything she had lived in Geneva, from hopes to harsh reality. Douglas knew how to listen and understand Stacie's state of mind and she felt like having in front of her a man able to understand pain.

â##I can only imagine how you feel. You donâ##t have to feel ashamed of your pain, but try to draw strength from this situation. I met you a few months ago because you were mentioned by Detective Cross. I didnâ##t know how you were, and even less if your decanted abilities were real. But I came to know a determined woman, almost stubborn, without for this reason renouncing to her fragilities.â## Stacie was listening to him inebriated. â##From this meeting I understand more than ever how complicated it is to let live together work and emotions. What I can assure you is that, the day that youâ##ll fully make it, you will be able to say you have control of yourself and live totally your life without having to necessarily sacrifice a part of it.â##

Stacie listened impressed to Prosecutor Douglas. His words hit the mark. They werenâ##t advices, but traced a road that seemed already covered. It was her turn and she had to get back in the game taking all the risks of the case.

â##I thank you a lot for your words, and even more for the way you welcomed me. To me thatâ##s an extra reason to show you all my gratitude. If and when you consider it appropriate, I still will be available to give you my professional help.â##

â##Good, thatâ##s how we talk. You are so needed here. Frank Berrimow already called twice in the last hours to get informed about you. You know, he works at the Detective Bureau now and heâ##s the one who will help you on your next case. In your absence Iâ##ve been designated as Prosecutor of New York

Southern District. Now, weâ##ll deal with the cases happened in Brooklyn or in the Bronx, too.â## Douglas poured more coffee in Stacieâ##s cup.

â##Are wheels already in motion?â##

â##Unfortunately yes. A murder in the Flatbush neighborhood in downtown Brooklyn. A manâ##s throat was cut and the right eyeball was taken away.â##

â##Oh my God!â## Stacie seemed horrified at Douglasâ##s words.

â##Unfortunately given the details, everything makes us think of...â##

â##â##! Of a psycho cut-throat around New Yorkâ##s streets.â## Stacie finished Douglasâ##s sentence.

â##Exactly! And now itâ##s on you. Do you feel like diving out there again?â##

â##Yes, absolutely! Iâ##ll go to Frank, so we can start as soon as possible. Prosecutor Douglas, remember that I owe you one.â## Stacie, even if she was still recovering, seemed to take stock of Timothy Douglasâ##s words.

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Frank Berrimow was sat at his desk and had in front of him a pile of papers through which he nervously went looking for something. There inevitably was his cup with the New York Police Departmentâ##s emblem on it. Frank was a Policeman proud of his work and proud of serving his country. The redundancy of symbols that reminded him his affiliation with the

Community was so easy to find such in that Police Office as in a simple bar. Frank didn't escape the stereotypical American guy at all.

When he saw Stacie coming closer, he jumped. It was equally exciting to her. That experience together following the De Sena case, during which they both staked their lives, had the effect of creating between the two a strong complicity. They had worked together just for a few days but their relationship seemed to last long before. Frank didn't know yet anything about what had happened in Geneva, so Stacie told him right away how it went and tried to let him understand how hard was for her to get back to work now that Sam wasn't there anymore. Obviously she left out the whole nightmares that were haunting her thing; she wasn't into the idea that she could be considered crazy, depressed or something like that. They had the chance to talk for a few minutes. You couldn't consider Frank such a deep man as Timothy Douglas and Stacie knew this. She also knew that what could seem simple set phrases, the only ones that Frank could pull out during their conversation, came straight from his heart.

Frank, thank you for your words. If I'm here it's to start working together again. Forget what happened in Switzerland, I'm trying to get over it quickly. I know I will need some time, but also with your help, I'm sure I'll make it. Douglas told me about the terrible murder in Brooklyn, about your engagement at the Detective Bureau and gave me free reign.

Now, tell me everything you know and let's start without further delay.

Great. I've been here reading papers for two days, but you're way better than me in this stuff. Now I'll tell you. Do you already know the details of the murder, from the throat-cut to the injuries inflicted?

Yes, Douglas mentioned something, it's terrifying.

The man murdered doesn't have criminal records, there was no robbery of money and from the documents we know whose corpse it is. He was a forty-years-old married man. Besides the wife, he left also two daughters, ten and twelve years old. He lived in a nice apartment in Brooklyn. Basically an almost perfect life which didn't suggest this kind of end.

And why was he in that area in the middle of the night? That's not a nice place.

I interviewed his wife very tactfully, given the situation. It seems that that evening they had had a small argument, nothing flagrant, and he had left by car to clear his mind. She said that he often had this kind of reaction when they argued at home.

What were they arguing about?

I didn't feel to insist. Someone just killed her husband and I didn't feel like insisting.

Sure. Obviously we have no validation of this version, but I don't think it's important in our killer research. I also think that the wife told the true. Stacie tended to exclude

the wife from this story, maybe making a mistake, because she couldn't attribute such an atrocious crime to a woman.

What were you reading before? Stacie looked at the papers on Frank's desk.

Oh, yes. I was doing some research about serial murders happened in the State in the last decades, trying to understand if there are some common elements between this case and the most famous ones. Frank was clearly clumsy in front of Stacie. He almost feared that he couldn't live up with her role. When it occurred, he looked away to the floor and started stammer. It wasn't hard to understand. But Stacie did nothing to emphasize it. That allowed him to rapidly recover and delude himself that, maybe, she didn't even notice it.

What have you found of interesting?

Nothing at all. And, if I have to be honest, while I was flipping through these papers, I really hoped you were coming back, because you'd surely do a better work than mine.

Don't beat yourself up. While doing a search you never know which way to go. If you're lucky you'll turn to the shortest that brings you to your destination, but if you don't have the stars on your side, you can spend sleepless nights without get blood out a stone. Let's do this, I take these papers and leave you free to go. Try to know something else about the victim and most of all if there was a reason why someone had to hate him this much.

Thank you Stacie, I think it's a great idea. I'm going

to take a walk. I'll also speak with Officer Michael Pet. He took over me in the first hours after we intervened. I'll listen what he has to tell me and if there are any particulars that I missed.

Before going, who's your boss now?

Jack Folasky. The Chief of the Detective Bureau. He's a bonsai manic and can't stand cigars' smell. Frank replied whispering.

Let me know who the coroner is. I want to talk to him. Stacie already had a plan in her mind. Knowing if the murderer was a male or female would have halved the investigation field. The coroner would have dissolved all her doubts.

Sure. I'll give you his contacts as soon as I know something about him.

Stacie got to work as soon as Frank turned to go away. First she poured some coffee from the jug that was right there in front of her. She had never been a real coffee drinker, but since she had come back from Geneva, she was appreciating its taste. She read some of the papers that Frank selected, but didn't find much. She spent more time thinking than reading. She thought about the murder's details. A throat cut and an eye carved out. There was to expect that the killer wouldn't stop there. It didn't seem a crime destined to be isolated.

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Jack Folasky was in his office attempting to fix some papers, when he saw Stacie coming in from the partially open door.

“Welcome back, Stacie. Frank was in anxiously waiting. I guess you’ve already met, so I can spare you the details. Folasky wasn’t as fascinated as Douglas about Stacie’s investigative abilities. In addition, he didn’t have a big estimation of women. Despite everything, he was used to give everyone a chance.

“I’m here most of all to know you better and understand if there are some suspects, some traces I can start following. Prosecutor Douglas gave me free reign and I’m completely at your disposal.”

“Stacie, It’s clear to everyone that this murder preludes to something else. Because of this, all of my best men are with their eyes open in the worst streets of Flatbush neighborhoods. Unfortunately, from my experience, I think that the next victim will hardly be in that area. In the meantime, Frank and you can take any action. Keep me updated about any aspect, even apparently insignificant. Although he doubted of Stacie’s abilities, Folasky couldn’t refuse the expertise of the District Attorney’s assistant.

“I’ll try to give my aid to the investigation. I see that this story has some totally different edges from the one I previously dealt with, but my engagement won’t be different, that’s for sure. Stacie was lying. Surely she was scared of what was going to be. It wasn’t about a missing person but a brutal murder. The difference was obvious. Moreover, she was entering that case in the worst state of mind possible, after Sam’s

death. Only a huge strength of character, united to her huge commitment to her job, could give her back full confidence in herself.

By the time Stacie got back home, it was late in the evening. The return had been definitely challenging. If only Sam was there with her, now she would have gone to bed tired but willing to go back to the Department deciding with Frank how to give the first breakthrough. Unfortunately she unavoidably dragged with her the pain from the separation with Sam, a pain that was going to accompany her over a very long period of time.

From the manholes was coming out so much steam that visibility was really reduced. As if it wasn't enough, the street lighting seemed to work worse than usual. It was really cold and that wool coat wasn't enough at all to shelter her. It was hard to move forward without risking to trip over something or simply catch the corner of a wall.

She was walking slowly putting her hands in front of her to make her way. She started hearing her shoes making a strange noise. She had the feeling of walking in mud. She started to have difficulties to move forward and didn't understand what was over the shroud of mist. A few more steps and just a little more light showed her the most horrible scene in which she really was. She was walking in a gigantic blood pool that went from one side to the other of the street. At least a centimeter of smoky liquid blood was covering the asphalt that she was hurrying so hard to traverse. She managed not to vomit and walked another

couple meters until she turned the corner to understand where was that stuff coming from. She saw a black car with the motor off and the lights still on. From the driver's window she could see a shadow. She forced herself to move forward in that terrible situation. The stink was so strong to get into the brain. She could feel the smell of blood inside her.

When she was two steps from the car, she stretched out a hand towards the shadow. A street-lamp lighted again in that very moment and lighted up what was Sam's face with the throat torn apart so that he had lost river of blood, that same blood that was rinsing down the whole street. Stacie didn't hold back a scream, although her hands were on her mouth. Then she backed off of a few steps but she fell disastrously on the ground swallowed by mist and blood.

In that very moment, Stacie opened her eyes and found herself on the floor next to the couch of her apartment swallowed by blankets. She took a few minutes to get over the state of panic which she had drowned in. Another nightmare. She burst into tears and stayed sit there for a while before deciding that having a shower was the only way to get that discomfort away. So she did.

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Stacie that morning was showing off bags under her eyes worthy of the best insomnia.

Hi Frank, what's new?

Good morning, Stacie, you don't look well. I'll try to cheer you up with some fresh news. I know well that, when you

start working, whatever your discomfort is, then it goes away.â##  
â##Youâ##re absolutely right. Tell me everything then.â##  
â##I had a chat with the coroner, doctor Andrea Coretti.  
The weapon that provoked the mortal cut to the throat was a  
switchblade, while the eyeball could have been removed with the  
same knife used for the murder as well as with a fruit corer.â##  
Frank was excited, not at all disgusted by those macabre  
particulars. He couldnâ##t give any sense to the information  
received by the coroner, but he was sure that Stacie knew how  
to interpret them.

â##Well, we know that the killer didnâ##t use common  
weapons. He might not be a professional killer. Are there any  
fingerprints?â##

â##Apparently not.â##

â##Did your coworker Michael give you any useful detail?â##

â##Unfortunately not.â## Frank, as it usually happened to  
him when he was embarrassed, took his eyes off Stacie. After  
all, he didnâ##t come with big news.

In that moment Officer Pet came to call the two of them.

â##Please, follow me in the Bossâ## office. Thereâ##s  
something you two should know.â##

Frank and Stacie looked at each other with a mixed expression  
of surprise and dismay.

â##Guys, I called you because horror is spreading in the  
Brooklyn neighborhood. To people and newspapers the killer is  
known as the â##Cut-throatâ## and, as predictable, the press

won't easily look away from a such a juicy prey..."

Besides Stacie and Frank, on Jack Folasky's office there were about twenty agents engaged at the Detective Bureau.

"... So, we're in front of two priorities now. The *Cut-throat* and the pressure of the public opinion. I demand maximum commitment. Sergeant John Cutter will help with the investigation together with Frank Berrimow and obviously Stacie Scott, DA's assistant."

Stacie walked out of that room thoughtful. The time available wasn't never enough in those cases, especially if there was the fear that another murder could happen.

Frank got close to her just in that moment and tried to change the atmosphere that was definitely serious. Frank didn't take John Cutter's designation in the wrong way. Maybe this way he would have run out of some responsibility.

"Stacie, tomorrow evening my wife will force me to attend a boring charity evening. Why don't you come with us? There'll be a lot of powerful people from New York. You know how these things work. It could be a good way to change scenery and clear your head."

"I don't know what to say, but after all you got a point."

Stacie thought that changing scenery could really give her some ideas. Things were getting damn serious and she needed to find a starting point.

The following evening, Frank, in the company of his wife

Shona and Stacie, went to the Empire State Building. At the hundred-second floor there was taking place a gala event organized by the second world war's veterans committee. There were old soldiers that wore with pride their best uniforms accompanied by their relatives, that followed them sometimes proud, and in some other cases clearly bored. The hall was perfectly staged. American flags and banners were everywhere. It wasn't missing the usual full buffet. A Captain dead a few weeks before was commemorated in occasion of this evening.

Shona, how is it that you're so bounded to these memorials? Stacie broke the ice.

My dad died in war. Anyone who had a parent engaged in a war such as the second world war or Vietnam is marked for life. And if your dad doesn't come back with his legs, I don't know if you can understand how strong can pain be. These occasions are needed to share emotions and keep the memory alive.

You're right. Pain is an intimate emotion and I deeply respect every attempt to relieve the sufferance caused from a human loss.

Stacie didn't lose a loved one in war, but what had happened to Sam in Fort Tryon Park was really close to a battle. As if it wasn't enough Sam had passed away because of a cancer, the only feeling of not having him anymore with her destroyed her, so she really understood Shona's words.

While Stacie and Shona were talking sipping an aperitif, two

men came close, a veteran who moved slowly forward with his stick accompanied by a man on his forties.

“Hello, if I may disturb. You are lawyer Stacie Scott, aren’t you?”

The man in his 40s clearly showed to know already the answer.

“Yes, that’s me. How can I help you?” Stacie was surprised, but the fact that someone recognized her wasn’t new anymore.

“Downtown I read about that tragic murder in Brooklyn. Maybe you could tell us something more. Does the police suspect about anyone?”

Stacie felt kind of annoyed by both the question and the fact that she didn’t have any clue about how to answer.

“The Police is working hard. I’m doing my consultancy job on behalf of the District Attorney. I can’t tell you anything, but we’ll do everything possible to put behind bars that psycho.”

In the meantime, Frank heard the statement and appreciated Stacie’s way to decouple. They had no lead, that was the truth. That couldn’t be shouted out from the rooftops.

“I’m sure of it. The killer has his days numbered. If he would have known that Stacie Scott was going to follow the case, he would have thought of it twice before cutting that man’s throat.”

“You’re overestimating me. Anyway I get your compliments as an omen. I don’t seem to have heard your

name, though.â##

â##You can call me Matt.â##

Matt neatly said goodbye and went away in the crowd. Maybe he was the son of that soldier or of a man dead in the second world war. Stacie understood that the interest caused from that murder was stronger than she thought. The fear that a killer was around on the loose was a lot and a second crime would create panic among the public opinion.

Frank praised Stacie for the way she had answered that man. It was unavoidable, in a public place, to risk to expose themselves with peopleâ##s questions. Although, Stacie managed not to lose her temper.

Between chats and some drinks a couple more hours passed before the evening came to an end and Stacie could go back home.

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On 11 November 1995 in New York, as in every other corner of the United States, they were celebrating the armistice day. It was a special year because it was the recurrence of the second world warâ##s decennial.

In Fulton Street, west of Flatbush Avenue, was taking place a commemorative evening. About thirty veterans accompanied by their families were meeting in that house for a few years already to remember their missing comrades. Hugs and smiles appeared every time with the same spirit. What permeated from the faces of those soldiers was the gained consciousness that they made it,

without never forgetting the past. To organize the armistice day was Tenant J.F. Jordan. His initials stood for John Frenchie. He had come back from Europe a few weeks before the others, but he would have carried the signs of that terrible experience in his skin for all of his life.

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