

The Black Series
Of
Thirteen Chapters

In the eyes of evil

Volume 1

MARIO CÔTÉ

The black series of the thirteen chapters- In the eyes of evil – Volume 1

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Dedication of the author

Dear readers,

I wish you a pleasant moment of relaxation through the diversity of my universes. Hoping that they will entertain you and escape from the daily routine.

May your reading be most entertaining!

Thank you for your encouragement,

By Mario Côté, versatile writer

Biz Xoxoxo

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CHAPTER 1

The eyes of the devil

Under a torrential rain, inside a house that had been abandoned for some time, screams of supplication from the basement were heard, getting lost in the echo of the stairs leading to the main floor.

“NO, PLEASE! I WILL DO ANYTHING YOU WANT! I BEG YOU! DON'T HURT ME! I BEG YOU!” she implored him, shedding all the tears of her body, trembling with fear.

Despite her complaints, the man didn't seem to hear her victim. In his eyes shone the devil's glow. Suddenly, he grabbed an axe and the woman's eyes expressed terror.

“NOOOOOOOOOO!!!” she screamed, before receiving the fatal blow.

The man stood with his axe dripping with fresh blood that spread all over the cement floor. The woman's body lay on what appeared to be a wooden table, bathed in a pool of blood. Her severed head had rolled to the floor, staining the surface a bright red. The murderer finally put down his bloody axe and picked up one of the black garbage bags to place his victim's head in. Then he continued his barbaric butchery by cutting off each of the other limbs, placing them in different bags.

Once his slaughter was over, the unstable man added a piece of paper to the bag containing the head, writing: "*The Butcher*", as if to add a signature to his work. Gruesome, you say? For this lunatic, it was all a game of excitement and delirium....

The rain had gradually stopped. The murderer grabbed the numerous bags and put them one by one in his red van. Before beginning his murderous process, the man had taken care to put on latex gloves so as not to leave any clues for the FBI investigators. This was not Jack's first crime. He was very familiar with the steps of an investigation as he had studied for several years in a police academy with the goal of becoming an FBI investigator himself. However, it had not gone as he had planned, and insanity had taken hold of him.

The authorities had nicknamed him "The Butcher of Springfield" for his crimes, which were a mixture of cruelty and violence. In fact, despite his tenacity, former detective Doug Jarvis was never able to incriminate the individual for the crimes that were spread out over nearly twenty years.

Jack "the Butcher" Burnston walked along the little, seldom traveled paths he knew like the back of his hand. They led to a huge field full of corn plants. At the far end of this expanse, an old

farmhouse had been condemned after a couple and their child disappeared. No one really knew what had happened. There were rumors that they had run away because this place was inhabited by an evil spirit. Others claimed that the father had murdered his family and then hanged himself in the barn next door, however the authorities denied these claims. According to them, none of the rumors were true. Many more were spread, but never confirmed. These stories were chilling and for this reason, no one dared to set foot there anymore!

With each of his murders, Jack would come and bury his victims, but always kept one of the limbs to send to former Detective Doug Jarvis. Why would you ask me? I would tell you that he held a grudge, the detective was chosen over him. Doug was always bragging and considered himself the "best". So, you can imagine the rivalry between the two men. Jack was nothing like Doug. He was very intimidated by others, reserved and self and withdrawn. But that didn't prevent him from having an above-average intelligence. When Jarvis found out, he used him to start his career, but of course, no one else knew except Jack and him! The worst part of it all was that because of this inspector, he had been fired for cheating on exams, which was totally false! Because the real story was far from this truth. In fact, several weeks before the exams, Jarvis had elaborated a twisted plan by asking Tassy, one of his ex-girlfriends, to convince Jack to steal a copy of the

questions for the final exam. At first, Jack refused, but Tassy had several advantages that no man could resist. Her narrow waist, angelic face and goddess-like body meant that she could win over any man. After insisting on Jack for several weeks, she finally managed to get him to agree. Without meaning to, he had fallen madly in love with her. But what Jack didn't know was that the copies of the questions for the final exam were chipped so that when someone tried to take the documents out of that building without permission, a signal would automatically go to the superiors. When Jack returned with the document to his room at the boarding school, Tassy took the opportunity to coax him out and, while he slept, put his clothes back on, took a picture of the document and snuck out. When he woke up the next day, Jack was surprised to see that his girlfriend was gone. He contacted her and she told him that she had never loved him. He was devastated by her words! But, firmly believing that she was the love of his life, he called her back to ask for further explanation. Tassy was categorical and brief with Jack, telling him that she had never been interested in him and that it was Jarvis who had engineered the whole thing to get the copy of the questions for the final exam. Jack was overcome with anger and rage. The more he thought about it, the more the insanity and the desire for revenge crept into him. Later that day, he was summoned to the college office and immediately fired. To Jarvis and Tassy's delight, no one knew about this scheme. From that moment on, Jack understood that he had been deceived and betrayed by the man he thought was his

best friend and by the girl he had fallen in love with. Following this event, nobody heard of him anymore, he had disappeared into thin air!

The Springfield butcher stopped at the end of the cornfield, near the abandoned barn. Behind it was a huge pile of black soil used to fertilize the farmland and which dated back many years. The body parts that were buried there had only made the soil more fertile. Moreover, a few hours earlier, the rain had soaked the place thoroughly. Jack took a shovel from his van and dug three deep holes. One for the lower limbs, another for the upper limbs and finally the last one for the trunk of his victim's body. Since the earth had not yet dried out due to the enormous amount of rain that had fallen, it took him barely an hour to complete his work. Then he went back to his van to get the bags, which he threw into each of the holes before covering them with black earth. Finally, he added some garden flowers seed so that no one would notice!

After putting his victim's head in a cooler in the back of his van, Jack returned to where he had committed his diabolical crime to clean up. He was very meticulous, and no detail had escaped him so far, which allowed him to go unnoticed. Physically, he was athletic because he had to work very hard, he had become a butcher in the true sense of the word.

No one suspected that he was the famous serial killer. Jack Burnston appeared to be a respectable man who was very concerned about his appearance. In fact, before becoming a butcher, he had modeled for several well-known magazines, but his modeling career ended abruptly when one of his former neurotic girlfriends set fire to their apartment. In an attempt to save her from the flames, her back, legs and right arm were burned to the second degree. After this terrible tragedy, Jack was forced to give up his modeling career.

Now he had to plan the final stage of "his work," as he liked to say. Although he made a habit of lining the inside of his van with plastic, the butcher cleaned it from top to bottom. After completing his task, he had to get "his package" to the FBI. He took the head from the black garbage bag, put it in a box and wrote on it *Open Me*. He waited until nightfall to drop off his package in front of a house, knowing full well that human curiosity was such that it was inevitable that the package would be opened. When he dropped it off, Jack took the precaution of not turning on his headlights and driving away quietly. To him, this was like the joke that all young teenagers play, which is to ring the bell and run as fast as possible hoping not to get caught. At the same time, it gave him an adrenaline rush that only fueled his insanity.

The next morning, a man in his forties, still in his pajamas, was leaving his house to pick up his mail when he saw a box on his doorstep. The man, intrigued, picked it up and prepared to open it, not suspecting that what he was about to discover would totally overwhelm him. Just as he was about to do so, a young woman appeared on the doorstep and interrupted him.

“Honey, what are you doing?” she asked him, intrigued to see him bent over, as she couldn't see the package.

“We received a strange package.”

“Oh really? You little rascal, it's a surprise you wanted to give me, isn't it?”

“Uh... sorry to disappoint you sweetheart, but it's not at all.”

The beautiful young woman's face changed dramatically when she realized that this package had nothing to do with what she thought. Her lover felt a certain uneasiness, because indeed, today was his wife's birthday.

“Then, you are going to open this parcel, or I will do it!” she answered in a frustrated tone while advancing towards him to satisfy his curiosity.

“I... I will open it, answered her lover with a low face.”

As soon as he opened the top, a strong odor came out and both looked at each other unsure if they wanted to continue.

“Now that you started... continue”, she ordered.

“Very well.”

When the man opened the bag, he saw something round. So, he thought that one of his friends had played a trick on him by sending him some kind of stink bomb, but he was very far from the truth. As soon as he opened the bag and pulled on what he thought was a bad joke, he realized that it was a human head and, in its eyes, you could see the fear and horror. He vomited while his girlfriend screamed in terror to such an extent that she woke up the entire neighborhood...

Upon hearing the scream of his neighbor, their closest neighbor, Max McFee, woke up with a start. His heart had just made three turns, he was so surprised. He jumped to his feet, grabbed his cell phone, put it in his pajama pocket and rushed out of his house to help the neighborhood. The moment he saw the severed and bloody head next to his neighbor, who was vomiting his guts out while his spouse lay on the floor, he immediately called 911.

“Hello!”

“Yes, what is your emergency and please tell me your name.”

“I... I...”

The neighbor was out of breath because he was so nervous.

“Calm down, sir! Calm down! Take a deep breath before continuing the conversation, you will see that you will feel much better.”

“Thank you, ma...’am, my name is Max McFee, and I am in front of my neighbor's house and... and...”

“Tell me quietly what's going on, Mr. McFee. We are here to help you, I am listening.”

“My neighbor is vomiting; his wife is unconscious on his right and on his... to his leffff...”

“What's on his left?” asked the dispatcher, trying to analyze the situation.

“Left, there... there... is a head!” he ends up articulating.

“I'm not sure if I'm right. I'm not sure I understood the last sentence very well. Can you repeat it?”

“Yes. There is a chopped off head full of blood.”

The operator was so stunned by what she had just heard that no sound came out of her mouth. For a few seconds there was a dead silence and then suddenly she answered him:

“Very well, Mr. McFee. I'm sending emergency services to you right now and a police patrol. I'll stay on the line with you while the emergency services go to your house.”

“Thank you!”

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CHAPTER 2

Irreplaceable confidant

Meanwhile in Strafford, the neighboring town of Springfield, Kelly-Ann Guess was sitting on her bed and looking at pictures of her recently deceased grandmother on her cell phone, crying. This beautiful young woman with hazel eyes and amber hair was very close to her grandmother and they used to confide in each other. Unfortunately, she had left this earthly world to go to the afterlife and since then, Kelly-Ann seemed lost. Her parents were both working, and their respective careers were taking up a lot of space, which didn't help her at all. The young adult could only turn to her friends, who didn't have her maturity. Even though Fergus, her father, and Falon, her mother, trusted her completely, she missed their presence terribly as well as her grandmother. In an attempt to take her mind off of things, her mother suggested that she go back to school and enroll at Springfield College and try to get a scholarship. Not being academically minded, she refused at first.

After thinking it over, she changed her mind, figuring that maybe it would take her mind off the sadness she was feeling, which made her mother happy. She knew that the college had an excellent reputation and that getting a scholarship there was no guarantee! Nevertheless, she had sent in an application and for two weeks she had been worried sick. No news from them. Not holding still anymore, Kelly-Ann decided to go out to join her friends at the restaurant of the corner.

When she arrived in front of the restaurant window, she saw her friends sipping soft drinks. Among them was Janis Rumulus who was the tallest of her group of friends. Her silky black hair and green eyes gave her an irresistible charm. Then there was Bianca Celest. With curly brown hair, medium-sized brown eyes, and a fairly visible chest, she observed more than she spoke. As for Kimberly Taylor, the third of the group, she liked to attract attention. Blonde with azure eyes, nobody could ignore her, and she loved to be noticed by the opposite sex! Finally, Krystal Shefferson, her favorite who, like her grandmother, was her best confidante because unlike the other girls in the group, Krystal could keep a secret. Speaking of secrets, Krystal understood very well what her friend was going through. She had a crush on Kelly-Ann for a very long time but had quickly understood that it was only a fantasy since Kelly-Ann was attracted to the opposite sex. Her red-haired, blue-eyed, narrow waist often turned men's heads.

Despite the many invitations she received from them, Krystel refused categorically, not shying away from telling them that she was not attracted to men. Kelly-Ann entered to join them.

“We're glad you decided to come out of your house,” Krystel said, relieved to see her friend finally come out of her hibernation state.

“Hello girls,” she said with a shy smile.

“Are you feeling better?” asked Bianca.

“Yes, thank you for your concern. I'm sorry I didn't get back to you.”

“Come on! You don't have to apologize to us, we understand you know,” replied Krystel.

“Krystel is right, we understand very well. You know, I lost my grandmother too,” added Kimberly.

“Are you kidding? You don't even have a grandmother!” Janis said, seeing that she had just told one of her usual lies to try to comfort Kelly-Ann.

“That's just it! She's dead,” said Kelly-Ann, trying not to add fuel to the fire.

Janis and Kimberly often argued because of their similarities and their constant competition with each other. The two friends, noticing their attitude, apologized.

“Sorry, Kelly-Ann!” Janis said.

“Yeah, we're really sorry,” added Kimberly.

“That's okay. It's not a problem.”

“Tell us, do you have any future plans?” asked Bianca, changing the subject.

“Yes, actually my parents have convinced me to go back to school.”

“Oh yeah! That's great!” exclaimed Krystel.

“That's excellent, it will take your mind off things,” added Bianca.

“That's what my parents think too. I applied for a scholarship two weeks ago and I should have an answer soon.”

“What do you want to study this time?”

“I've decided to study journalism.”

“Really?” said Kimberly.

“She has a right to decide what she wants to study!” said Janis, insulted.

“Please, girls, enough of this childish bickering!” said Kelly-Ann.

“Sorry!” they replied at the same time, understanding that Kelly-Ann had had enough of their attitudes.

“By the way, which college did you apply to for your scholarship?”

“Springfield College.”

“That means that if you're accepted, we won't be able to see you as often,” Krystal said, saddened by the news.

“Not necessarily. I could make arrangements with my mom or dad to come when I have vacation time or sometimes on weekends. I know I haven't been very close to you lately, but you can see why.”

“Sure,” said Krystal, relieved with her answer.

“Of course, we don't blame you,” added Janis.

“That would be ridiculous of us,” said Kimberly, giving her rival, Janis, a superior look.

Their conversation was interrupted by a call Kelly-Ann received.

“Hello, Mom.”

“Are you home right now?” her mother asked.

“No, I'm with my friends.”

“Say hello to them for me.”

“My mom says hello to you,” she repeated.

“Hello Mrs. Guess!” they replied in chorus.

“I'll be home soon. Would you have dinner with me, or would you rather stay with your friends?”

“I'm going home, Mom. I'll be there shortly.”

“All right my lovely daughter, I love you very much, see you later!”

“I love you too, see you soon!”

Kelly-Ann rarely had the chance to have a meal with her parents. Their work often took over their family life and she often paid the price. However, Kelly-Ann had grown accustomed to this over time, and it was what made her a mature and responsible woman. She continued to chat with her friends for a while.

“I agreed to have dinner with my mother,” she said cheerfully.

“That's great! I'm happy for you, you don't see your parents very often,” Krystel said.

“I wish my mother was like yours, because as you know, she only cares about my stepfather,” said Kimberly bitterly.

“But at least you don't lack anything,” replied Bianca in an envious tone.

“Listen, girls! I love you all as you are and I would like us to make a promise to each other.”

“What kind of promise?” asked Krystel.

“No matter what happens, I want us to stay in touch. Do you promise me that?”

“Yes, of course,” they answered in unison.

“All right, so I have to go, but we'll be in touch.”

“Okay Kelly-Anne and promise to take care of yourself,” Bianca added.

“I promise. Bye girls!”

“Bye!”

They came forward one after the other to give her a hug, and Kelly-Ann left the restaurant with a heavy heart, because she knew that if she got her scholarship, she wouldn't see them as often. As she walked toward her home, she saw a pretty woman looking at herself in a window and applying makeup. Parked not far from her was a van. But, too preoccupied with making herself beautiful, she did not see the man in the red van who was watching her with a look that did not bode well. The pretty young woman had the face of an angel. She wore a white satin dress with flowers and a necklace of grayish pearls on her neck made emphasize more her charisma. Kelly-Ann observed the young woman with fascination, noticing her angelic features. After having finished to make herself a beauty, she jumped in a cab which moved towards the station always under the eyes of this maniac. Kelly-Ann saw the red van following the cab but paid no attention to it and went on her way.

After walking about ten minutes, she arrived at her house. When she opened the door, Kelly-Ann saw her mother talking on the phone. The latter signaled her to wait a moment since she was about to end the conversation. Her daughter responded with an

affirmative nod and a smile on her face. Finally, when her mother hung up, she hugged her.

“How are you doing my sweetie?”

“Very good, Mom.”

“I know that the loss of your grandmother has affected all of us, especially you. I know about your relationship with her, and I want you to know that I'm sad for you and if you need to talk, I'm here.”

“Yes, I know, Mom,” she replied sadly, knowing in her heart that the relationship she had with her grandmother was unique and very special, not to say irreplaceable.

Seeing her daughter's sad face, Falon tried to change the subject.

“Tell me what you prefer, eating at home or going to a restaurant?”

“I'm fine at home, Mom.”

“I'll go with that. What would you like?”

“I'm not that hungry, but maybe a simple shrimp salad would do.”

“Just that? Are you kidding me?”

“No, Mom. Just that will do.”

“Well, whatever you say.”

“Thanks for being here, Mom.”

“Of course. I am aware that your father and I are not often present, and we are sorry for that.”

“You don't have to apologize; I understand very well.”

“You know that we love you.”

“Yes, I know that. And I love you too.”

Sensing her pain, Falon hugged her daughter. Despite their overwhelming jobs, Falon and her husband Fergus loved their daughter deeply. Falon was a flight attendant while her husband worked as a co-pilot. They were aware that despite all the comforts she enjoyed, it was no substitute for the one thing that was most important to a beautiful woman her age: the presence and love of her parents. Certainly, she had never suffered from poor nutrition or financial support since her parents bought her everything she needed. However, even though her grandmother took care of her while her parents were away, Kelly-Ann had long felt emotionally insecure. From a young age, she also suffered from nyctophobia, a rare condition characterized by a fear of the dark or of going blind.

After this tender gesture between mother and daughter, they discussed various topics over dinner. Falon was surprised to learn that her daughter loved to express her emotions through writing. Kelly-Ann was a hyper-sensitive girl and hated being alone. Often, when her grandmother was still alive, she always made sure not to leave her beloved granddaughter isolated in a corner. Together

they practiced many artistic activities such as writing, painting and pottery. Probably the fact that she cared for Kelly-Ann as her own daughter created a bond between them that was much stronger than that of a mother and daughter. But whatever the case, Falon knew that she missed her daughter's grandmother terribly, as well as herself. Only time will erase the pain of losing a loved one...

The next day, Falon left at dawn for work and left a note for her daughter on the kitchen table. A few hours later, Kelly-Ann woke up and got up. She saw that her mother had already left. When she got to the kitchen, she read the note her mother had left her.

Hello my beautiful,

I just wanted you to know that I loved our dinner and I promise I'll make it happen more often. I left my car in the garage and took a cab. If you want to use it, I hung the keys in the lobby. Be careful! We love you very much!

Kisses from mom and dad

P.S. I'm going to try to convince your dad to join us for the next meal I'm going to organize.

Kelly-Ann smiled a little as she read this message, for she knew that convincing her father to join them was no easy task. Fergus,

which was her father's name, had never really given her time. Was it because he had never wanted children? Or was it because his work always came at the expense of his wife and daughter? Only he could answer that question, but Kelly-Ann hadn't counted on him for very long.

She made herself a nice breakfast and watched the news. Sunny days were forecast for the next three days. After finishing her meal, she went to the mailbox to get the mail. Suddenly, one of the envelopes caught her attention. When she saw that the letter was from Springfield College, she felt a mixture of excitement and nervousness. Kelly-Ann opened it.

Miss Kelly-Ann Guess,

This letter is to inform you that your scholarship application has been accepted...

She screamed with joy under the euphoria. She jumped around the house shouting with happiness. “*Finally, I will be able to realize my dream of becoming an accomplished journalist,*” she thought. When Kelly-Ann came to her senses, she read the letter again. In her mind, she had thought she would be able to come back on weekends to visit her friends, but as she read the letter again, she realized that she would have to live on the college

campus full time. The young woman realized that she had a difficult choice to make, either leave to fulfill one of her biggest dreams or stay at Stafford for her friends and get a crappy job. While this choice seemed simple, for Kelly-Ann it was far from it. If she decided to leave, could she get used to the loneliness? She wasn't quite sure. One thing became obvious to her, that she had to make a decision and inform her parents as soon as possible...

CHAPTER 3

The package of horror

Sirens wailed in the city of Springfield. Authorities and emergency personnel arrived at the scene where a package had been dropped. Lorna-Dusty Fletcher was still lying unconscious, while her husband, Morgan Fletcher, was vomiting at the horror. Her neighbor, Max McFee, didn't know which way to turn. His gaze went from Fletcher's wife to her husband who was vomiting his entire body, to the bloody head lying on the floor. Max was relieved to hear help coming! Paramedics rushed to the still unconscious woman. Meanwhile, two FBI agents got out of their vehicle and rushed to the scene to interview the primary witness and the caller.

“Hi, I'm Agent J. R. Bartley and this is Agent Kayci Tamaras. Are you the one who called?”

“Yes, I'm the neighbor across the street and my name is Max McFee.”

“Can you tell us what happened?”

“Actually, all I can tell you is that I heard a scream that woke me up with a start. When I arrived, I saw Lorna unconscious and her husband Morgan vomiting. It was when I saw the bloody head that I realized what was going on.”

“All right. Tell me, did you see anyone else in the area other than your neighbors?”

“I couldn't confirm this, because I was so stunned to see this scene that my eyes couldn't see anything else.”

“I understand. Kayci, would you like to interview Mr. Fletcher while I go talk to the paramedics to see if I can interview his wife. I thought I saw that she just woke up.”

“Yes, she did. No problem.”

“All right, then. We can write up our report with the testimonies we have collected.”

“I'm going.”

Officer Kayci Tamaras was a very pretty woman with feminine features. Her grey-blue eyes and black hair brought out more the beauty of her face. She had luscious lips and forms that left no man indifferent. However, Kayci was not attracted by men to their regret. She walked towards Morgan who had stopped vomiting,

because they had recovered the bloody head and the box in which it had been put and these two elements became pieces of evidence for the investigation.

“Hello Mr. Fletcher, are you feeling better?”

“Yes, thank you.”

“I am Agent Tamaras in charge of the investigation, and I would like to ask you some questions if, of course, you think you are in a position to answer me.”

“I am better, don't worry. I'll do my best to answer any questions you ask,” Morgan replied, noting the irresistible charisma and sensuality this woman exuded.

“Did you see the person who dropped off this package?”

“Unfortunately, no.”

“What time was it when you saw this object?”

“About 7:30.”

“Didn't you find it strange that someone would drop a package on your doorstep?”

“Of course, but I thought it was my neighbor playing a joke on me.”

“Really?”

“Yes, because Max is a prankster by nature, so...”

“And what makes you think that it wasn't him who left the package in front of your house?”

“Come on, ma'am! My neighbor is a joker, but he's not a murderer.”

“Are you sure about that?”

“Of course, I'm sure! What a ridiculous question,” he answered, insulted.

“Sorry, I didn't mean to offend you.”

“No, it's all right.”

“Do you have any enemies?”

“I don't think so.”

“Any debts?”

“That's none of your business, ma'am!” he said, offended.

“Look, I'm just asking you questions for the investigation. Don't take it personal, I'm just doing my job.”

“I'm sorry. You'll understand that I'm still in shock.”

“Yes, I understand Mr. Fletcher. If you don't feel up to answering me, I could come back, or you could also contact me.”

“You are right. I think this is a bad time to answer your questions.”

“So, in that case, here is my card. Give me a call when you're feeling better, okay?”

“Yes. Sorry again.”

“Don't worry, we are used to this kind of situation, and we understand.”

“Thank you.”

“I'll let you rest and as soon as you feel better, you have my number.”

“All right.”

“Get some rest and we'll talk again.”

“I will.”

Agent Tamaras left Mr. Fletcher and went to her partner to inform him of the situation.

“I think Mr. Fletcher needs to rest. Have you had any more success?”

“Not really, his wife is still in shock. The paramedics didn't want me to interview her. They sedated her to calm her down.”

“Okay. What do we do in the meantime?”

“We're going to go back to the office to find out about the people we just interviewed to see if they are hiding anything.”

“All right.”

The two FBI agents headed for their office while the Fletchers were being transported to the Springfield hospital. Of course, reporters as well as curious people had gathered in front of the

Fletchers' neighbor's house to question Mr. McFee. Mr. McFee turned a deaf ear to the reporters, not answering any questions, and went home and slammed the door on them. Seeing that they got nothing from one of the main witnesses, they left the place followed by the other curious people.

A few hours later, Agent Tamaras received a phone call from the forensics department in charge of the "horror package" investigation, as they had named it.

“Good evening, Agent Tamaras, this is Brandon Hoppers, the medical examiner in charge of the investigation of the package received by the Fletchers this morning.”

“Good evening, Dr. Hoppers.”

“According to the forensics I performed, the head was severed with a sharp weapon.”

“What kind of weapon do you think?”

“I would probably say an axe.”

“An axe?” she exclaimed.

“Yes.”

“What else can you tell us?”

“According to the samples taken, the head would be that of a woman, the blood type would be A+ and, moreover, I can confirm that the date of death is no more than twenty-four hours.”

“Were you able to identify her?”

“Indeed, I have! It would be a young student of twenty-two years named Becky Cox who was studying at the Springfield College to become a future police officer.”

“My goodness! I can't believe it! So young and already six feet under! Plus, I'm sure her future in law enforcement was assured!”

“Why do you say that?”

“I know her parents,” she answered morosely.

“Sorry, I didn't know.”

“You couldn't have known. That's all right.”

“I don't know what to tell you,” Brandon replied uncomfortably.

“There's nothing to say.”

“I offer my sincere sympathies to you and her family.”

“Thank you, I'll pass it on.”

“I have to go. I still have a lot of work to do.”

“Don't you ever take a break?”

“I don't know that word,” he said to make her laugh, but he saw that it didn't work.

“I say good work and good night.”

“Yes, thank you, and good night to you too.”

Agent Tamaras hung up absent-mindedly. She knew the Cox family very well, as she had dated Becky's sister, but had been left with a bitter taste. Indeed, Becky's sister, Helen, had committed suicide because of prejudice and the fact that her parents were homophobic. Feeling rejected by them, Helen decided to end her life. After the tragedy, Agent Tamaras lost all contact with the family. She never heard from them again, at least until today...

Kayci arrived home a few minutes after receiving the call, which was still troubling her. She decided to take a bubble bath to relax. When she undressed, her clothes revealed a perfect figure. Very firm breasts, pulpy lips, a feminine chin, buttocks with sensual curves revealing the beauty of this woman and which would make a model green with envy. Her body was flawless except for the freckles on her shoulders, although this gave her more charm even if from her point of view, these spots were not sexy.

She wrapped a towel around her waist and headed to the bathroom. She ran a warm water and fetched a bottle of wine that had been opened the day before and poured it into a crystal glass. When her bath was ready, she gently soaked it. In Kayci's head, painful memories came back. She remembered the many arguments they had had because of Helen's parents. Conversely, Kayci's parents had not made any judgment about their daughter's sexual orientation. For them, the most important thing was her

happiness. Unlike her partner, Helen had regular confrontations with her parents. Because of the pressure she felt from them, she decided to die, because nothing was more difficult for her than to see judgment or prejudice in their eyes.

It took Kayci several months to forgive them. In fact, even today she still felt some resentment towards them. Sometimes, painful moments from the past resurface, like a scar that never really heals...

After an hour of bathing, Kayci came out of the bath, her fingers crumpled like an old blouse. The water was sliding on her silky skin. On her dream body, a quiver appeared revealing its fragility. She took the towel which she had deposited on the edge of the bath and wiped herself. Afterward, she wrapped herself of this one and took the direction of her room to put on a pyjama of flowered cotton. The FBI agent opened the refrigerator in search of something to munch on while watching television. She saw rye toast and a piece of *foie gras*. Thinking about the pounds that would be added by eating the bread and *foie gras*, she changed her mind and settled for a strawberry yogurt and a green apple. She finally sat down in front of the television to watch the news.

“This is the Springfield News. I’m Phils Collins and we join our colleague Barty Preston for today’s news.”

“Good evening, Phils! According to our sources, it looks like the "Butcher of Springfield" struck again today, indeed...”

Kayci interrupted this bit of information by changing the channel and finally decided to turn off the TV after she finished eating her yogurt and apple. She put a pair of headphones on her ears and settled under the covers. Kayci loved to listen to relaxing music before falling into a deep sleep and that's what happened, her eyelids got heavy and she fell asleep...

CHAPTER 4

A horrifying nightmare

The young woman got out of the cab and headed for the station. A few meters away from her, a red van was standing still in the parking lot. Murderous eyes were avidly watching her. The woman with angelic features went to the ticket office to buy a train ticket to Springfield. The man got out of his car and followed the pretty lady from a distance. She did not notice that someone was watching her. She took the ticket that the cashier gave her and headed for the new platform that indicated a departure in less than fifteen minutes. The stranger realized that this irresistibly charming woman was taking the train to Springfield. *"Well, well! If I had known, I would not have followed her all day, this high-class hooker!"* he said to himself, in a frustrated tone. In fact, Jack knew this woman with angelic features, since his half-sister Tassy had been among his first victims. At the time, Tassy had been his girlfriend, or so he had thought...

Joana Perks was even prettier than her half-sister Tassy. In fact, they had the same mother, but not the same father. For this reason, Joana did not look much like her half-sister. She had green eyes like a cat's, her long reddish-brown hair fell over her shoulders and down to her round buttocks. Her honeyed voice and rounded face gave her a sweetness that she no longer possessed when she felt that someone wanted to control her. In fact, her clients found her very shy during their sexual encounters. Some of them complained while others asked for more. This woman, although she seemed as fragile as a rose petal, did not let herself be imposed upon. On the contrary! In a moment of panic, she looked like a real tigress!

This woman had a very heavy and difficult past. Her father had abandoned them when she was a child and her mother suffered from alcoholism. Joana often hung out on the high streets looking for the affection of a father and mother she never really knew. Unlike her half-sister Tassy, who was younger than her, her life was very different, as at the age of five she was placed in a foster home and adopted. Unfortunately, Joana never got that chance! Since her teenage years, she has known nothing but drugs, alcohol, and debauchery. By the age of sixteen, she had started dancing in bars. Today, however, she had become what was called a "high-class prostitute" and worked for an agency called *The House of Joy Girls*. Money now led her life. Her career as a luxury prostitute allowed her to stay in the best hotels and travel to many cities.

Since her half-sister had been found decapitated by the Springfield butcher, she had decided to be more careful with customers and was always carrying pepper spray. Fortunately for her customers, she had never had to use it, at least for now...

About fifteen minutes had passed when Joana saw the train from the station coming in her direction on the horizon. Not far from her, eyes were spying on her without this pretty woman noticing, too preoccupied by the train she was watching with relief. “*At last,*” she said to herself. The wagons stopped, she waited for the doors to open. As soon as they did, Joana sat comfortably in one of the cars and watched what was happening outside. She saw the butcher's eyes staring at her. Her reaction was instantaneous, thinking that he was a pervert by his look, she gave him the finger while the train was moving faster and faster. The individual gave her a murderous look and she lost him in the momentum of the train.

About thirty minutes had passed between the butcher's look and the departure of the train. She had just realized that she might have escaped from a pervert. “*Lucky!*” she thought. In the meantime, the hostess of the train arrived with her tray in front of Joana unexpectedly and startled her.

“Sorry, ma'am! I didn't mean to frighten you,” apologized the hostess.

“No, it's nothing!”

“Can I get you something to drink or eat?”

“A bottle of water will do, thank you!”

“You're welcome. The TramWay FastLine wishes you a pleasant journey. Good evening, Madam.”

“Thank you, you too.”

The hostess handed her a bottle of water and continued her way. Joana's heart was still racing. *“I should rest, I think I'm getting tired,”* she thought. She lowered the seat and made herself comfortable; she still had an hour's ride to the Springfield station. *“I have enough time to take a little nap,”* she thought. As soon as her eyes closed, she fell asleep...

Joana fell into a deep sleep. She felt as if she had just stepped back in time and saw herself and her half-sister at the age of five. They were playing hopscotch in the backyard. She remembered her half-sister's laughter, *“how I miss her,”* she thought, realizing she was dreaming. Suddenly, the images changed, and she saw herself a few years later in a room that did not tell her anything. Joana was dressed in a bright red negligee and was lying on a heart-shaped bed. She saw devilish red eyes in the shadows, and this thing hidden in the half-light gave her a "chill". The figure of a man

approached, pronouncing his name louder and louder. Fear invaded Joana's body and she began to tremble. Suddenly, she felt herself being jostled and woke up with a start as she saw the hostess she had seen earlier in the car. Still traumatized by what had just happened, she realized that it was not a dream she had had, but a nightmare. She regained her senses and heard the small voice of the train hostess.

“Sorry to wake you up, ma'am. We've arrived in Springfield.”

“Uhhh... yes, thank you,” Joana replied, still in shock from the nightmare from which she had just emerged.

When she got up from her bench, she almost stumbled, taken by a sudden dizziness. Her heart was still pounding from the sudden awakening.

The working-girl got out of the wagon. Walking a few steps, she saw a cab and headed in its direction. When the driver saw this beautiful woman, he hurried to open the back door for her.

“Good evening, pretty lady. Please, take a seat!”

“Good evening and thank you!”

The man looked in his rearview mirror to admire the beauty of this woman with a large chest. Then he asked her:

“Where shall I take you, pretty lady?”

“To the Holyday Inn Hotel, please.”

“Let's go!” he said, giving her a charming smile in his rearview mirror.

The driver took route forty-four and during this journey he and his client remained silent. When he arrived at the destination, the driver opened the door for her. Joana paid the cab fare and gave him a generous tip, and the man gave her his best smile despite a few missing teeth. She smiled back at him and turned to head back to the hotel. The driver didn't get into his car right away, he took his time to contemplate and undress this woman with curves to dream about.

Joana entered the hotel and went to the reception. A young man was leaning over and flipping through a business magazine. Suddenly, he felt someone watching him and looked up. His eyes met the gaze of this woman with sensual features.

“Good evening, Madam. Sorry, I did not mean to...” he tried to explain himself.

“No, that's fine,” she interrupted.

“To which name is the reservation?” he asked.

“Mrs. Joana Perks.”

“Yes, I see. Here is the magnetic card, it's suite 15057, located on the fifteenth floor. You take the right corridor, and the elevators are in the middle of this corridor. I hope you enjoy your stay with

us and have a good night. If you need anything, you have a direct line to the reception in your suite.”

“Thank you very much.”

She took the magnetic card and went to the corridor on the right and saw the elevators in the middle. Joana pressed the button and it lit up in fluorescent green indicating that it was coming from the basement to the upper floors. At this late hour, there weren't many customers, and the elevators were moving faster. The door opened and the high-class prostitute entered and immediately the doors closed behind her. A metallic voice asked her which floor she wanted to go to, and then the same voice listed each floor she had gone through, finally stopping at the fifteenth. The doors opened and Joana got out of the elevator. She walked along the right corridor in search of her suite. Once in front of the door, she inserted her magnetic card and a click was heard announcing that the door was now unlocked.

The *décor* of this apartment was extremely luxurious. A beautiful multi-colored chandelier at the entrance lit up without leaving any corners in the shadow. The crystal floors were shining, which confirmed that it had been recently varnished. On the walls of the entrance, there were magnificent paintings that represented breathtaking landscapes! In front of these was a large living room with a wall-mounted bookcase, a long comfortable armchair, a marbled table and a television that spanned a full wall. Behind this

living room was a hallway that led to a well-stocked kitchen and finally, diagonally across the room was a luxurious master bedroom, decorated with furniture that had been handcrafted. In the center of this grandiose room, a magnificent octagonal bed gave it a very special style. Finally, a door led to a bathroom that was the size of three rooms. To the left, an antique clawfoot tub with chrome faucets gave it an unmistakable authenticity. To the right, a sink in shades of gray and white ran the length of the wall, and at the far end, a double shower with two doors finished off this luxurious room. Satisfied, Joana closed the door behind her and dropped into the long chair. After a few minutes, she undressed to take a nice bath. The day had been exhausting for her. When she was finally settled in this luxurious bath, she took a deep breath to let out all the accumulated tension. Half an hour had passed before Joana decided to get out of the tub. Since she had been planning her arrival at this luxury hotel for several days, her luggage had arrived an hour earlier. When she got out of the bath, this woman with sensual curves wrapped a towel around her waist and headed for the main room. She saw that her luggage was set up next to the bed. Joana opened a suitcase to take her underwear and a red lace negligee. After putting them on, she rummaged in the refrigerator for a bottle of red wine and filled her cup halfway. Afterwards, she settled in front of the television while at the same time, one announced a breaking news.

“Good evening viewers, this is the Springfield News. I’m Phils Collins and we’ll be joining my colleague Barty Preston live.”

“Good evening Phils, we have been informed that the notorious "Butcher of Springfield" has struck again. Indeed, according to our sources, a couple would have made the discovery of a package left in front of their home the night before. It seems that this package contained the head of a victim of this serial killer. According to the FBI, the victim was a student at Springfield College. The agents did not want to tell us more details since an investigation is in progress...”

Joana didn't wait for the reporter to finish his report, she closed the television set, stretching out her whole body and yawning with fatigue. She didn't bother to pick up her cup of wine, which was about a third full, and went to lie down on her gigantic bed. Laying her head on her pillow, she fell asleep immediately.

The next morning, she woke up and ordered breakfast from her room. From where she stood, she could see the view of the city of Springfield. The sky was cloudless and beautifully blue. Joana planned to go shopping for some fashionable clothes and then raid the drugstore to buy some beauty products. She put on a pretty denim mini-skirt and a turquoise sweater; she took off the necklace she had forgotten to take off the previous night before she fell asleep. Joana took her purse and left the suite to take the elevator. Once on the first floor, she smiled at the receptionist who wished her a good day and left the hotel along a wide boulevard that led to

the lingerie stores. Just as she was about to enter a new boutique, her cell phone rang, and she immediately answered.

“Yes, hello!”

“It's Martha from *The House of Joy Girls*. I would like to know if you are available to work tonight?”

“Yes, Martha. Do you have a customer for me?”

“Yes, I do. Tell me, does the name Jack mean anything to you?”

“No, why?”

“The client asked for you specifically.”

“Is that so?” she said surprised, because it was quite rare that a client asked for a prostitute specifically.

“I know that normally you have to give us a percentage after you've done your job, but not this time.”

“What do you mean?”

“The client has already paid in advance in addition to giving a generous percentage for you that I will give you when you come to see me tomorrow.”

“He's already paid everything?”

“Yes, he has. I have to admit that normally that's not the house procedure, but with what he gave, I told him that we would make

an exception for him and that obviously the service would be impeccable. Do you know what I mean?"

"Obviously!"

"So, is it okay for tonight?"

"Of course. Where will the meeting take place?"

"You have an appointment right next to the Second Cup, right next to this café, there is the "Crazy Nights" motel, it will be waiting for you in the lobby. Don't forget to contact us once your work is finished."

"Did the client express any special taste in clothing?"

"Not at all."

"Perfect."

"Remember, caution is the key."

"Yes, I know that Martha, as usual I always carry my pepper spray."

"Excellent!"

"I'll get back to you after my work is done."

"Very good."

After hanging up, Joana continued shopping, unaware of the danger she was in. Used to this pace of life, she knew that the night would be long. However, she didn't know how long it would be...

CHAPTER 5

Krystel's secret

Fearing the darkness, she had left the lamp on, spending all night thinking. Kelly-Ann had finally decided to leave and tell her parents. She picked up the phone and contacted her mother.

“Hello mom.”

“Hello beautiful, how are you?”

“Very good.”

“Do you have something to ask me?”

“Yes, and I also have some news for you.”

“Oh yes, what is it?”

“I received an answer to my scholarship application.”

“And?” she asked excitedly.

“You'll be happy, Mom, I got accepted.”

“Hooraaay! I'm happy for you, sweetie.”

“Me too, Mom, it will take my mind off things.”

“Yes, it will.”

“I was waiting for the answer with so much anxiety.”

“I understand, but you see, everything is for the best.”

“Yes, I know.”

“When do you have to leave?”

“Tomorrow at the latest, but I think it would be better if I left after dinner.”

“That's fine. By the way, what did you want to ask me?”

“I don't know if you'll want to, but I'd like to borrow your car to get there. You could ask Dad to come with you to pick it up and that way I could give you a tour of the campus.”

“I have to say that's a great idea, honey.”

“So, do you agree?”

“Yes, but on one condition.”

“What's that?”

“Promise me you'll be very careful on the roads.”

“I will, Mom. I promise.”

“Excellent. Don't forget to call me before you leave home and also when you get to campus, okay?”

“Yeah, don't worry, I will.”

“I guess you'll have to say goodbye to your friends?”

“I do.”

“I know it must be hard for you, but they can call you there.”

“That's what I was going to tell them when I see them.”

“Don't forget that if you need anything, we are here.”

“Yes, I know, Mom, and I thank you for that.”

“Be careful!”

“Yes mom, you already told me.”

“You are right! So, I wish you a safe journey.”

“Thanks mom.”

“We love you very much, my darling.” Her voice became more melancholic even though she tried not to let it show.

“Me too mom, I love you very much,” answered Kelly-Ann noting that there was sadness in her mother's voice.

“I have to leave you now, because we're getting on the plane soon.”

“Okay. Have a good trip too mom!”

“Thank you beautiful and don't forget to call me or send me a message before you leave and when you get there.”

“Yes, I know, Mom.”

“I'll talk to you soon sweetie, don't forget that I love you.”

“Yes, I love you too.”

They hung up at the same time. The young woman's cheeks were discreetly tearing. Goodbyes had never been her favorite thing. Before sending a text message to her friends to give them a new appointment at the local restaurant, she prepared her suitcase. This way, she would be ready to leave when she returned. Once finished, the young woman did not take the car since the restaurant was only a few blocks from the house. Just before she left, she sent them a message to set up the meeting place. Kelly-Ann left the house with a heavy heart because she knew that what was coming would be no task, especially for Krystal, her closest confidant, who had just lost her grandmother.

She took her courage in both hands and arrived in front of the restaurant and entered it. She saw her friends in a deep discussion. Too preoccupied with their conversation, they didn't notice that Kelly-Ann was listening and waiting for them to finish their conversation. Suddenly, Krystal saw her out of the corner of her eye.

“Hey, girls, Kelly-Ann is here!” she exclaimed.

“Hello, girls. I see you were having a big discussion,” she teased them.

Janis, Kimberly, and Bianca turned their heads briefly and synchronized like professional swimmers performing a swimming technique. Kelly-Ann laughed out loud as she watched them do it at the same time.

“Are you girls okay?”

“Yes, Kelly-Ann. Very good,” they said in unison.

“What did you want to talk to us about?” asked Janis.

“It sounded important,” added Bianca, a little worried.

“I hope you don't have any bad news for us?”

“Actually, I have good and bad news.”

“I knew it, I knew it,” said Kimberly.

“Will you shut up and let her talk, for God's sake, Kim!” Janis cut her off.

“Thank you, Janis. The good news is that I got a letter from Springfield College, and I've been accepted for the scholarship.”

“Congratulations!” said Bianca.

“Thank you.”

“And the bad news?” Krystal asked hastily.

“I have to leave tonight.”

“WHAT! “

“I admit that I understand your reaction, girls, but...”

“Yes, I understand, and I congratulate you,” Janis hurried to say to show her understanding.

“I also congratulate you and I'm happy for you,” added Kimberly.

“You always wanted to pursue further studies in the field of journalism, so this is your chance,” said Bianca, cheerful and happy for her friend.

They were all happy for her except for Krystel who did not share their enthusiasm. She knew very well that by leaving, she would make new friends and risk losing her. In fact, for the past few weeks, Kelly-Ann had not confided in her. She kept to herself. However, she knew very well that she did not risk anything with Krystel who had never revealed her most intimate secrets. Moreover, nobody knew, not even Kelly-Ann, that Krystel hid a secret love towards her best friend. At this moment, the pretty redhead with blue eyes had just taken the decision to reveal her the feelings which she felt for the young woman. Even if she knew pertinently the risks she incurred by revealing this terrible secret to her, she thought that in any case, it was necessary that she stopped deluding herself with illusions or fantasies which would never become reality...

While Kelly-Ann went around to hug each of her friends in turn and promised that she would get back to them with new developments, Krystel had quietly whispered in her ear that she had something very important to tell her in private. Kelly-Ann understood and whispered back that she would wait for her before heading to Springfield.

A few minutes after she arrived home, the doorbell rang. Kelly-Ann suspected that it could only be Krystel. She opened the door and invited her in. She saw the sad look on her best friend's face but couldn't really guess what she wanted to talk to her about in private. Only by her eyes, Kelly-Ann understood that the announcement of her departure had not made the happiness of all.

“I know you don't like me leaving.”

“I'm sorry, I'm not able to hide my emotions.”

“I can understand why you might feel sad about me leaving, but you could also be happy for me. I'm finally going to be able to do a job I've dreamed of since we were little. Do you remember, I kept telling you about it?”

“Know that I too only want your happiness.”

“So, what's the problem? I don't understand your reaction.”

“I had to tell you before you left.”

“What do you want to tell me? Enlighten me, I don't understand.”

“Kelly-Ann, I'm in love with you,” she finally told her.

“WHAT?” she exclaimed.

“You understood well. I'm in love with you and it's been going on too long. I should have confessed you my feelings much earlier, but I did not have courage to say it to you.”

“I must admit that I expected anything from you, but certainly not this kind of revelation. Especially before I left.”

“It is precisely this reason that made me react and gave me the courage I was missing to tell you my feelings.”

“I'm sorry, but I'm stunned, not to say shocked!”

“Yes, I understand your reaction.”

“I find it flattering in a way, but as you know, I am not attracted to women. I'm really sorry.”

“I knew that, but I had to tell you so that you would know. I want to tell you that the only thing that scares me is that you reject me.”

“I will never in my life let you down. You mean too much to me, not the way you see it, but you know that now.”

“Thank you for your understanding. There is a question that I am asking myself.”

“Yes, what is it?”

“Why have you been so distant from me for the past few weeks? What I mean is, why don't you confide in me like you used to?”

“I want you to know that it's not because I don't trust you, because it's just the opposite. It's just that I was in a bad phase, that's all!”

“Okay, I see.”

“I want you to understand that even distance won't erase the complicity we have with each other. I love you very much my beloved confidante,” she said to her by holding her in her arms to reassure her.

Krystel burst into tears, and Kelly-Ann couldn't hold hers back for long. Now that Krystel had revealed her most intimate secret, she felt relieved and free of the weight she had carried for so many years...

After the departure of her confidant, Kelly-Ann made sure that she did not forget anything and took her suitcase to put it in the trunk of the car. The big moment had finally arrived, the hour of the departure had struck, and the adventure began... What did the future hold for her? Why had her best friend hidden such a secret from her? Obviously, Kelly-Ann was not attracted by women, nevertheless, today with this revelation, she would not see her the

same way. She would always be her best friend, of course! However, she knew that telling her about her future relationship with a man would only hurt her more given Krystel's feelings for her. Kelly-Ann didn't want to put her aside, just to keep her from being hurt even more. She had no doubt of the courage it took to confess such a secret. For this reason, she could only admire her and hope that one day she would finally find her soul mate and happiness...

CHAPTER 6

A powerful reflex!

While Kelly-Ann in Stafford was leaving home and Joana was still shopping in Springfield, Jack "The Butcher" was busy planning another twisted scheme for his next victim. He had already contacted the House of Joy Girls to make sure everything was in place for his next prey. Of course, he had been planning this for some time, but he knew it wasn't time to act yet, at least not until tonight...

At the FBI office, Agents Tamaras and Bartley were continuing their investigation, but had not found anything conclusive yet. Meanwhile, their supervisor, FBI Director Doug Jarvis, was sitting comfortably in his chair, leafing through old files on the serial killer, Jack "the Springfield Butcher. For several years, he had been working on these files to find a clue, but without any success.

Moreover, he wondered why this murderer would send him a part of their body after each murder committed. Was it to taunt him for not being able to catch him? Or was there another reason? Since he had never been able to catch him, he thought his colleagues considered him incompetent, or worse, a laughing stock of the FBI? To tell the truth, he didn't know and wasn't sure of anything!

Suddenly, there was a knock at his door. The FBI director invited the visitor in. When the door opened, Agent Tamaras' face appeared.

“Hello, boss.”

“Hello, Tamaras. Do you have any news about the investigation?” he asked with an air of discomfort.

“To be honest with you, no.”

“So, what is the purpose of your visit?”

“I have a question to ask you.”

“Go ahead, I'm listening.”

“Don't you find it strange that every time the butcher kills, he sends you a piece of his victim?”

“Yes, I do! And that's one of the questions I was asking myself when I was looking through the old files.”

“Is it possible that these murders have something to do with you?”

“What do you mean Agent Tamaras? Explain yourself.”

“I think this serial killer is after you.”

“Is that so!”

“I know I don't have as much experience as you do, your reputation precedes you, but I think we might need to look at the investigation from a different angle.”

“Thank you, that's nice for the compliment,” he said with an embarrassed but flattered smile. “Tell me what you mean by a new angle.”

“It's certain that he wants to pass you a message by his murders, I would say by revenge or because you became an obsession for him.”

“I see,” he said, looking thoughtful.

“You think of a situation in particular?”

“No, I'm just thinking right now,” he answered with an annoyed look as if her question had just taken him out of a moment of intense reflection.

“I'm sorry.”

“I'm just trying to find a reason for it all.”

“Yes, I understand,” she said.

“While I'm trying to figure out the answer to that question, you might want to take the opportunity to look through the files I have in front of me.”

“Very well.”

She grabbed the chair that was in front of her supervisor's desk and reached over to retrieve the files that were spread out. Her superior looked at her and asked:

“What are you doing, Agent Tamaras?”

“I'm doing what you asked me to do, boss.”

“I told you to take the old files, but not to look at them here. You can do that at your desk.”

“Oh, right. Sorry, I thought...”

“I know, but I need to think again and believe me, if you're standing in front of me, it's not going to help me focus.”

“Yes, I understand.”

She got up from her chair, picked up the files and walked out of the office, closing the door behind her. Jarvis watched her leave and thought about their discussion. When she returned to her office, she saw that her partner was on the phone with the couple who had found the package outside their home.

“I hope your wife has recovered from this terrible event?”

“Yes, thank you, agent Bartley. Tell me, could I speak to Agent Tamaras, please?”

“Sure, she just got back from her meeting.”

Turning around, he saw her with a stack of files and realized that this might be a bad time. Tamaras put down her documents and signaled to her colleague to pass the line to her, and he did so.

“Yes, hello Mr. Fletcher. How are you?”

“I'm doing just fine. Thank you for your concern.”

“What can we do for you?”

“I have a neighbor of mine who says he saw something.”

“Excellent, so can you give me his address?”

“Yes, it's 498 Broadway Avenue and his name is J.C. Greenstone. He's the one who called me, and he had left a message on my voice mail.”

“All right, we're leaving right now. Thanks again.”

“It was my pleasure and I hope you catch and lock up that lunatic.”

“Don't worry, we will.”

As soon as she hung up, Tamaras and Bartley left immediately. Perhaps they would get the head of this killer? Since the beginning of the investigation, nothing was progressing, but this testimony could perhaps lead them on a track...

The day passed in a flash. The time of the appointment with her client was fast approaching. Joana had only put on black jeans and a powder blue blouse. Since she didn't bring a purse, she put her pepper spray in a backpack that contained a change of clothes in case the night was hot and emotional! She walked out of her luxury suite to the meeting place next to a Second Cup. Nearby was the "Crazy Nights" motel where she was to meet her client. She went to this motel and entered. The man at the counter undressed her with his eyes, which did not intimidate Joana at all, because she was used to this kind of look, although the last time, she had made a finger of honor to a stranger who was in fact the customer she had to meet tonight, what she obviously ignored. Arrived in front of the receptionist of the motel, she asked:

“Good evening, I have an appointment with a certain "Jack".”

“Good evening, beautiful,” he answered in a way that was too familiar for a complete stranger. “Indeed, your knight is waiting for you upstairs in room 269A.”

“I was told he would be waiting for me downstairs.”

“No pretty one, he told me to send you up, probably so that you can show him what the seventh heaven is like, right?”

“Very well, in this case I will go up,” she says without paying attention to this inappropriate comment.

“That's it, baby, make him go up by the same occasion. Ha, ha, ha, ha!” he answered by laughing out loud.

She climbed the stairs to the second floor, looking for room 269A. This motel had nothing to envy, quite the contrary. This place didn't even look like a two-star motel, so neglected and shabby. Joana thought that her client might have paid in advance and given a good tip, but she would have preferred that he put a little more emphasis on the place than on the tip. Finally, out of the corner of her eye, she saw the room number of her future client. For some unknown reason, she was suddenly overcome with fear. However, Joana had been to several places that seemed less reassuring than this motel and a little voice in her head urged her to be vigilant. By reflex, she searched in her backpack and put her pepper spray in the back pocket of her jeans.

Arrived in front of the room, she knocked at the door and a man's deep voice invited her to enter, which she did. Immediately, she noticed that her client had dimmed the lights. *Probably, it was to put some romance and mystery?* she thought. At that very moment, she thought of the nightmare she had had on the train. Then, fear took hold of her, convinced that her nightmare would become reality. When she saw her client's face, his eyes in the darkness sent a shiver down her spine! Certainly, his eyes were not red like in her nightmare, but it gave her an impression of "*deja vu*" and an overwhelming fear invaded her, and she froze on the spot! The closer her client got to her, the more Joana backed away.

“Are you afraid of me?” he asked her.

“Euhh... no, no, it's only that I was surprised,” she answered with a fear in her voice that was obvious.

“Come on, I'm not going to eat you like the bad wolf after all,” he said, trying to reassure her.

“I... I know,” she said with a tremor in her voice.

“Look, I've prepared us a good meal. You're probably hungry?”

“No, not really.”

“Come on, make a little effort,” he said in his deep voice.

With the darkness in the room and his hood shading his face, Joana had no way to make out his features. However, she could see the eyes of the individual which seemed to shine in the dark. This is actually what frightened her.

“If you don't accept my invitation to eat, I'll have to contact your agency again, my dear, and I'm sure your boss won't be happy to hear that you turned me down for something so trivial,” he said in a snide and threatening manner.

“No, that's okay. I'll do anything you ask. Please don't contact her.”

“All right, then sit down and let's eat that succulent meal that may get cold.”

At that very moment, the individual understood that he had total control over her.

“Yes, you are right.”

He moved behind her to push her chair so that she was sitting comfortably. Joana took a step back but decided to play along so as not to displease her client. Obviously, despite this gesture of chivalry, it did not seem to put this "*working girl*" at ease, and she suspected that behind these gestures, there was always an ulterior motive. What she did not know yet, was that indeed all the gestures of this individual were calculated to reassure his next victim...

Less than an hour from the city of Springfield, Kelly-Ann had no idea that something was about to happen and that her life as well as Joana's was about to change forever...

The individual sat down in front of Joana. She still couldn't see his facial features clearly, but even so, she had decided to please him and eat with him. On the table, in the center, there were two lit red candles. To the left, a bucket containing ice was cooling a bottle of wine that must have come from a convenience store. To the right on a platter was a whole chicken stuffed with three cheeses in an orange sauce, and next to it was a covered dish that looked like it contained freshly microwaved macedonia. The wine had already been poured before her arrival and the cups placed in front of each of the plates. Joana didn't pay any attention to this as her eyes were riveted on her mysterious hooded customer. They ate without saying a word, but soon Joana felt strange. Everything

around her spun faster and faster until she lost consciousness. Everything went black...

Probably a few minutes had passed before she came to. She saw that the man had put her on his shoulders to go down the stairs behind the motel. When he reached downstairs, he put her down and she heard the doors open and felt herself being pulled out. Abruptly, the individual lifted her to get her into the back of his van. Still under the influence of the drug that the individual had probably poured into her wine glass, she did not have the strength to fight back. Jack looked at his next victim, thinking of the next steps as he tied her feet and hands behind her back and finally taped her mouth. He turned on the interior light of his van and lowered his hood to the mirror hanging in front of him. That's when Joana saw him. She was stunned! Then she remembered that just before getting on the train, she had given this man the finger. When Jack turned and saw that his victim was awake, he rushed toward her, but Joana was quicker than he was and threw both legs up to throw him against his van and a workbench that had all sorts of torture equipment. By the time her attacker regained his senses, she had the reflex to get her arms under her feet to free them. Dazed, but frustrated, the serial killer took a long knife and slashed his victim's right arm, causing her to scream in pain. As Jack lunged to stab her again, Joana took out her pepper spray and sprayed his eyes generously. He screamed in pain, and she took the

opportunity to free herself from the bonds that were holding her hands and feet and ran out behind the van, running for her life. Blinded by the pepper and the pain in his eyes, Jack could do nothing to stop his victim from running away...

Under the effect of adrenaline, Joana had not noticed that her attacker had cut her right arm deeply and that blood was flowing abundantly leaving traces on her path. At the same time, a small car ran in her direction. Kelly-Ann took her eyes off the road, too busy changing the radio channel. At the last second, Joana appeared in her field of vision. To avoid her, Kelly-Ann swung her wheel and hit a streetlight. Under the impact, the windshield shattered into a thousand pieces and the shards of glass pierced both of Kelly-Ann's eyes, and she lost all contact with reality. Then, it was the black hole.

CHAPTER 7

Saved from the flames of death

When Joana saw the vehicle hit the streetlight head-on, she rushed to the car, which was beginning to burn. Even though she was injured, and the car could explode at any moment, she rushed to the victim to try to get her out of the inferno as quickly as possible. People in the area contacted the emergency services and rushed to the two victims. Meanwhile, Joana managed to pull Kelly-Ann out of the car, unconscious and seriously injured. At the same time, an impressive explosion threw them a few meters from the scene.

Only five minutes had passed between the explosion and the call for help, when the emergency services arrived on the scene. Joana and Kelly-Ann lay unconscious. People surrounded the injured and police officers worked their way through them to allow the

paramedics to reach the victims. Among the onlookers was the one sought by the police and authorities. Jack was watching the scene in rage. Obviously, he couldn't hang around too long. So, he took one last look at Joana as the paramedics administered first aid and then left. The serial killer's career was coming to an end, and he knew it. Jack had made a very serious mistake by underestimating his victim...

Now the only two options were to find another way to kill his victim before she revealed everything or to disappear far away. However, there was one thing he didn't know, the man in the motel, upon hearing the screams behind the building, had called the authorities and when he came to retrieve his red van, he would have a welcome he would not soon forget! Indeed, when he arrived on the scene, no less than a dozen policemen were waiting for him. In the meantime, Joana had woken up and was telling the policemen everything that had happened. Jack, seeing that he was trapped like a rat, knelt down without resisting. The cops put him in the police car, and he was put in a cell to await the testimony of the motel clerk and Joana. It took two weeks before she was able to recover from her deep wound.

Following this terrible accident, Kelly-Ann remained unconscious, which was actually better in a way because she had suffered from nyctophobia since she was a child. The hospital

contacted her parents, who rushed to the Springfield hospital just two hours after their daughter was admitted to the center.

“Where is our daughter?” asked Falon, who could no longer hold her ground, unlike her husband, who seemed to have perfect control over his stress.

“Ma'am, ma'am! Calm down, please! This is a hospital, ma'am, please calm down!” said the head nurse.

“I want to know how my daughter is?” she said, trying to control herself. Her husband put his hand on her shoulder to reassure her.

“What is her name?”

“Kelly-Ann Guess.”

“Let me check my list.”

“Yes, all right.”

“Yes, she’s in room 415 which is located in the north section of the hospital, on the fourth floor which is reserved for patients with eye trauma.”

“WHAT? Did you say *“eye trauma”*?” she asked again to make sure she had understood correctly.

“Yes, I did.”

“If I understand correctly, that would mean that our daughter is blind?”

“I can't say at this time, but what I can say is that she is stable and out of danger. You should know that it is not my place to make a diagnosis, so I cannot comment on the condition of her eyes. Dr. McKerson will be able to give you more information. I will ask him to join you and explain what is going on.”

“Thank you,” said Kelly-Ann's father.

Falon and Fergus took the hallway that led to the northern section of the hospital and took the elevator to the room where their daughter was still unconscious. When Falon saw her lying inert on her bed with her eyes covered with bandages, she burst into tears.

“Honey, you have to be strong for her.”

“I... it... it's my fault what happened.”

“Come on, honey! It's nobody's fault! It was an accident. I think it happened through no fault of anyone.”

“But then you know what happened?” she said to him in a frustrated tone to be in the dark.

When they received the call from the hospital, they were only told that she had been in an accident without giving them any further details.

“Listen, when the doctor arrives, I'm sure he'll be able to give us some explanations, but in the meantime, please, calm down!” he begged her.

“Yeah right! Anyway, you were never really there for her! If you had been there, she would not suffer today!” she launched to him in full face without thinking that the words which she had just pronounced would make him suffer deeply.

Fergus' face became sad and for one of the few times since they had been a couple, his eyes filled with tears without them running down his cheeks. Fergus was very proud, and it came from his education. Indeed, he had been raised "the hard way". His father did not allow him to cry, he thought it was a sign of weakness for a man. Falon looked at him surprised, realizing that her words had gone beyond her thoughts. She walked over to him and took him in her arms.

“I beg your pardon, honey! My words just came out, but I didn't mean them at all.”

“I know you didn't. But I have to agree with you on one thing.”

“What's that?”

“It's true that I put my career before the two of you and I owe you both an apology, especially our daughter.”

“Don't say that.”

At the same time, the doctor appeared at the bedroom door. Kelly-Ann's parents turned in one motion as they heard the door open.

“Good evening. Are you Kelly-Ann's parents?”

“Yes,” said Falon.

“I'm Dr. McKerson. We'll let your daughter rest. If you'll follow me, we'll be more comfortable talking in my office.”

“All right, thank you,” said Fergus.

They walked down the hallway and turned into the northeast wing, the doctor opened the door to his office and invited them to sit down.

“Thank you, Doctor,” said Falon, relieved to know that she could now learn more about her daughter's condition.

“You're welcome. I'm just doing my job. It's time to talk about your daughter.”

“We're looking forward to hearing from you,” said Fergus.

“First of all, I have to tell you that your daughter was very lucky, because if it hadn't been for Joana Perks, she probably would have died. I'm sorry for my tactlessness,” he said, seeing the discomfited faces of his parents.

“Who is this woman, Doctor?”

“I can't go into detail, as there is an investigation currently underway, and I have an obligation as a medical professional not to divulge too many details.”

“We understand, Doctor.”

“The only detail I can tell you about this accident is that this woman was at the scene when your daughter hit a light pole.”

“Was she intoxicated?” asked Falon, offended at the idea that her daughter was irresponsible.

“According to our analysis, I can assure you that she was not. No drugs or alcohol were detected in her blood.”

“Ouff! Good!” she said, relieved.

“It is obvious that when she is conscious again, the authorities will surely question her as they did with Mrs. Perks.”

“Why is she in the eye trauma section?”

“I have to tell you that unfortunately, during the impact, your daughter received shards of glass in her eyes and lost her sight.”

“Nooooo!” screamed Falon, bursting into tears.

Her husband put a hand on her shoulder to try to calm her down.

“Please, calm down! I'm not finished,” the doctor added.

“What do you mean, Doctor?” said Falon's husband.

“Maybe there's an alternative.”

“Really?” she was surprised to hear as she dried her tears.

“But I can't assure you that it will work one hundred percent, because it's a new surgical technique being tested. We also don't know what physical and psychological effects the patient may have as a result of this procedure.”

“So, you can't tell us in advance how she will behave or what the effects will be after this experimental procedure?”

“Indeed.”

“Tell us, Doctor, what is the percentage of success for our daughter?”

“I'm not going to make you any false promises, the chances are fifty percent according to our estimates.”

“But it could restore her sight, right?”

“Mrs. Guess, the only answer I can give you is that you'll have to talk to your daughter to see if she'll accept it.”

“We'll talk to her as soon as the time is right.”

“Oh yes, before I forget. She will have to sign a release paper which is actually an agreement between the hospital and the patient that in the event that the surgery is not successful, she cannot come back against Springfield Hospital under any circumstances.”

“Very well. I will let her know, Doctor.”

“One last detail and then I will wait for your daughter's answer before starting the search process.”

“We're listening.”

“Sometimes the patient has to wait months before we find a potential donor. In addition, organ donors must remain anonymous.”

“Yes, we understand.”

“Very well. Then I will wait for the answer. I wish you a good night and we'll talk soon.”

“Thank you, Doctor, you too!”

“Don't thank me too quickly. Wait to see what the outcome will be before anything else.”

“Very well,” said Kelly-Ann's mother.

The couple left the doctor's office. Before going back to their daughter's room, they decided to go down to the cafeteria to discuss how they would explain the situation to her without freaking her out, as they knew that their daughter had nyctophobia. Also, they needed to find out if Joana Perks had been released from the hospital, as they wanted to thank her for her act of bravery and perhaps try to learn more about what had happened. They went into the cafeteria and had a coffee each and then sat down in a corner to have some peace and privacy, because even at this late hour, the cafeteria was crowded. Once they were settled, Fergus and Falon discussed their daughter.

“Honey, I just wanted to apologize again for what I said earlier. I shouldn't have let my emotions get the better of me.”

“I know, honey, I don't blame you at all. I want you to know that I understand.”

“What do you think about what the doctor said about the surgery?”

“Do you really want me to tell you what I think?”

“Yes, of course! It's important to me.”

“All right. I don't think the decision is ours. I'm sure Kelly-Ann will make the right one. I'll support her in whatever she decides to do because I have great confidence in her.”

“You're right. I trust her judgment too,” she said.

“You asked me what I thought, but you didn't tell me what you thought.”

“I agree with you completely. As I just told you, I trust her judgment.”

“Excellent!”

“After we finish our coffee, I'd like to find out if the woman who saved our daughter is still here.”

“Yes, that's a good idea.”

As soon as they finished, Fergus and Falon went to the hospital reception.

“Good evening, how can I help you?” asked a nurse in charge of welcoming new patients.

“I'm sorry to bother you, Nurse, it's for information.”

“Yes, how can I help you?”

“Do you know if the patient Joana Perks is still in the hospital?”

“Do you know what time she was admitted?”

“To tell you the truth, no, but we do know that she saved our daughter.”

“Oh yes! I remember now! What a terrible accident! Let me take a look at the register.”

“All right.”

“I see that she was admitted, but it seems that her doctor discharged her an hour after she arrived.”

“Oh well, that's too bad!”

“I'm sorry!”

“Do you think it would be possible to get her address?”

“If you are not a relative, I have to say no, unfortunately. I am very sorry, but it is part of our protocol.”

“Yes, we understand. Thank you anyway and have a good evening!”

“And to you too.”

For now, there seemed to be no way to thank the woman who had saved their daughter from certain death, but Falon promised herself that no matter what, she would find her. However, she didn't tell her husband about it.

CHAPTER 8

A light in the darkness

Springfield Hospital offered Kelly-Ann's parents the chance to stay with her until she woke up. They provided two air beds, sheets, blankets, and pillows so they could rest. Falon had trouble sleeping, but not her husband, who fell asleep when his head hit the pillow. With all that had happened, Kelly-Ann's mother took several hours to close her eyes. Panicked cries woke them up abruptly.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME? I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING! I'M SCARED, HELP ME! HELP ME SOMEONE, I PLEASE!” she screamed.

Falon and Fergus jumped to their feet and approached their daughter to try to reassure her. But Kelly-Ann, suffering from a phobia of the dark, continued to scream as if she was convinced

that death was coming for her. The nurses rushed into the room and asked the parents to step aside. Kelly-Ann continued to scream non-stop and tried to remove her eye bandage and the needle in her arm. Of course, they realized that the phobia was probably causing her to fabricate. The nurses had to use force to immobilize her so that the nurse could inject a sedative. Finally, after a few seconds, the sedative took effect and the nurses released her, she was calm now. The parents, having received permission from the nurses, approached their daughter to talk to her.

“My lovely daughter, it's going to get better now, we're right here with you.”

“Mom? Dad?” she said, realizing that her parents were near her, because in her panic she had disconnected from reality. Probably, without the sedative, she would still be in the grip of panic.

“Yes, we're here, it's Dad talking to you.”

“I'm... I'm scared.”

“Yes, we know that, but you don't have to be afraid anymore, we are here for you.”

“I can't remember anything.”

“It's okay, honey,” said her mother.

“What happened?” her daughter asked.

The two parents looked at each other, not really knowing what to say. Obviously, the situation was very delicate, and they didn't want to panic her. Fergus gave her a sign that he could trust him.

“Honey, it's Dad.”

“Dad, I'm so scared.”

“Yes, I understand you. I'll tell you a secret.”

“Yes, what is it?”

“You know, when I fly in the sky, I'm afraid too.”

“You are?”

“Yeah, just because you're a co-pilot doesn't mean that fear doesn't exist. Let me ask you a question.”

“I'm listening, Dad.”

“Do you remember the first time you rode your bike?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“You were afraid, weren't you?”

“Yes, I was.”

“But that didn't stop you from wanting to learn how to ride a bike, did it?”

“Indeed.”

“Fear can be a good thing if you know how to control it and a bad thing if you let it get to you, you know what I mean?”

“I think I do.”

“For me, if I let fear take control when I'm on a plane, I couldn't do my job. Fear is the feeling we get when we can't control something or our emotions. It can even prevent you from learning or understanding things if you let it get the better of you, that's what will happen.”

“I see,” she said, her face seemed to be thinking.

“I know I haven't been the most present father and I'm really sorry about that.”

“I don't blame you, Dad.”

“Thank you, sweetheart.”

“What's going to happen?”

“For now, your mother and I will stay with you as long as we can. We'll see what happens. The most important thing is that you get some rest. I want you to make us a promise.”

“What promise?”

“To do everything you can to control your fear and I know you can. I have faith in you, my dear.”

“I will do my best, Dad.”

“You know we love you.”

“I love you too.”

“All right, sweetie, so get some rest and when you wake up, we can tell you what's coming next. Do you trust us?”

“Of course, I do!”

“Excellent! So, sleep well.”

“Sweet dreams, my dear,” added her mother.

“While our daughter sleeps, I'll go to the cafeteria and get us some coffee. Would you like anything else, dear?”

“Maybe a raisin bran muffin, I'm not hungry for a big breakfast.”

“No worries, I'll get that for you.”

“Thank you, darling.”

“It's my pleasure.”

Falon watched her husband leave with admiration, for he would never have said that before to his daughter, since for him, work seemed to take more importance and place than his family. It seems that the words his wife had said to him earlier, even if they were offensive to him, seemed to have had a positive impact. *Finally! He finally understood that his work should never again come before our daughter*, she thought. Moreover, she did not know him so convincing, because he had succeeded in calming Kelly-Ann and in making her realize the misdeeds of the fear on the human being.

Meanwhile, at the police station, Agents Tamaras and Bartley arrived with the murderer and entered the interrogation room. On the other side of the wall, Chief Doug Jarvis, accompanied by two other officers, listened to the interrogation in progress behind the tinted window. But when Doug saw Jack's face, his heart pounded so hard that he felt slightly sick, which he tried to hide from the two agents who were in the room with him. The conversation with Jack began.

“Your name?” asked Agent Tamaras.

“I’m not obligated to answer your questions and you already know that.”

“Indeed! But if I were in your shoes, I would try to be less clever and cooperate so as not to aggravate your situation,” she suggested.

“I have nothing to say,” he concluded.

“Are you sure?” asked Bartley.

“You have no evidence against me.”

“That's where you're wrong, buddy!” replied the agent to destabilize him.

“You tell me that to make me talk, because you're bluffing,” said Jack, convinced of the unfoundedness of their claims.

“Not at all, you seem to forget that we hold your van which is currently in the hands of our specialists, but that's not all.”

The offender knew that he was doomed, but he still tried to make them believe in his innocence until proven otherwise, although at this very moment he was thinking about what had happened and that this "*high-class hooker*" had made too many mistakes for him to think about finding a way out. Of course, in no way should he show them that he was "doomed to die". He had studied long enough to know the ins and outs of the business, but perhaps not long enough to come out of it unscathed and clear of suspicion. Plus, the fact that they had his van in custody complicated things!

“You know you had to have a search warrant to take possession of my van,” he tried.

“We got it without any problem,” Agent Tamaras said, taunting him.

“I would be curious to know on what pretext you got it. It's true that with a "*nice ass*" like yours, you have an extra asset to convince a judge,” he said in an arrogant and snide tone to try to provoke her.

Tamaras understood what Jack was trying to do but did not take the bait. She smiled at him and continued the conversation as if she hadn't heard anything.

“To continue, I inform you that we have in writing the testimonies of two witnesses, the first one is the receptionist of the motel and the other one, the one of your victim herself as you could have guessed.”

Jack suspected that he was far from stupid despite the mistakes he had made with his last victim. However, even if he knew it, he wanted to hear it from Agent Tamaras. This would not bring him anything more, of course. Nevertheless, he dreaded the fate that "*the State*" had in store for him because of the many barbaric crimes and the insane torture he had inflicted on each of his victims. Bartley continued the interrogation by displaying several photos in front of the murderer in order to make him react, but Jack looked at them without feeling the least remorse, as if this man had no conscience. In front of this absence of reaction, the two agents understood that the individual who was in front of them had the soul of a psychopath.

On the other side of the wall, Doug Jarvis realized that all these murders were perhaps his fault and a bad judgment on his part. Sure, he had compromised Jack's career to save his own skin, but was that reason enough to slaughter all those innocent women at the expense of the murderous rage he felt toward the chief of police?

As the two officers questioned the Springfield butcher, several questions came into Doug's mind. What would have been the circumstances if this psychopath had been allowed to work in the police investigation field? In his mind, he saw a multitude of unusual scenarios straight out of the worst nightmares the real

world could imagine. Obviously, an individual like Jack, with an above-average intelligence, could have taken advantage of his position to commit the worst murders without anyone suspecting him, even though the best investigators and police officers had never succeeded in catching him, except for his last attempt. So, he didn't dare to imagine what it would have been like if this murderer had managed to work for the authorities.

Today was a very special day for Doug, he felt a sense of relief and joy within himself. Why do you ask? The fact that his ex-girlfriend had been murdered and that Jack was about to be sentenced to death for his horrible crimes, Doug would no longer have to worry that one of them would reveal his precious secret.

After a few minutes of questioning, the defendant's attorney entered the interrogation room and suggested that Jack not answer any more questions without him being present. Agents Bradley and Tamaras left them alone without protest. The lawyer began to talk with his future client.

“I will first introduce myself. I will be your lawyer and my name is Attorney Julius Allard. Now I need you to answer my questions truthfully, because if you don't...”

“I know, I know the law,” interrupted Jack.

“All right. Tell me your full name, please.”

“Jack "the Butcher" Burnston.”

“Is that name on your birth certificate?” the lawyer asked, surprised.

“The people I work with gave me that nickname.”

“Fine, but I want your real name.”

“Jack Burnston.”

“Your address, please.”

“I don't have one.”

“Sorry?”

“I just told you I don't have one.”

“Then what did you give your employer as your address?”

“The address of an abandoned house where I go to get my mail which is 606 Minota Street, Springfield, Missouri.”

“And your occupation?”

“I work at Butcher's House, and I do the meat cuts.”

“Perfect.”

“Do you have any other questions?”

“Yes.”

“What other questions?”

“Are you the so-called Butcher of Springfield?”

“Do you think so?”

“I'm not asking you to answer me with a question, I want you to answer my question.”

“You want the truth?”

“Of course, I do!”

“These are not crimes that I committed.”

“Oh no, and what do you call that?”

“A repulsion towards people who have made fun of me.”

“Really?”

“Yes. That's how I put it.”

“Don't you feel remorse for your actions?”

“Not at all.”

“Are you talking seriously to me now?”

“Of course, what do you think?”

“I don't know, you have to tell me.”

“I have nothing more to say.”

“In this case, I must warn you that if the judge doesn't show you clemency, you might face death. You are aware of this, I hope?”

“Death is only a stage for me, not a state.”

“What do you mean?”

“Simply that not even death can prevent me from continuing my mission.”

“And what is that mission, if I may ask?”

“The satisfaction of the murderous rage that rages within me.”

The lawyer looked at him in amazement. He now knew what he had gotten himself into. On one hand, it would perhaps revive his career, which had been floundering for some years. And on the other hand, it would plunge him into one of the biggest stories in crime. This led him to believe that the days to come would involve him in a whirlwind of legal paperwork...

The next morning, as the trial began, at the Springfield hospital, Kelly-Ann woke up after almost eighteen hours of sleep.

“Mom? Dad? Are you here?”

“Yes, we're here,” said her father in a calm voice.

“I'm scared, I'm so scared.”

“Yes, we understand, and we want to talk to you about it,” Falon said after consulting her husband's eyes.

“Really?”

“Your doctor came to us while you were sleeping and told us about an experimental project. But we waited to talk to you about it before we agreed to it.”

“I understand, but if it will allow me to see again, I will obviously accept. Otherwise, how else will I be able to realize my dreams?”

“You know, life doesn't stop even if you lose something, my child.”

“I know, Mom, but I would rather have lost an arm than my eyesight, you know how I have a phobia of the dark?”

“Yes, I know.”

“Did the doctor tell you that there are risks?”

“Of course, there are.”

“I'm ready to do it, no matter what it takes.”

“Are you sure?” asked her father.

“Totally!”

“Well, if that's what you want. Your wish is my command, your majesty!” he tried to say to make her laugh a little and make her forget this phobia that was eating her up inside.

“Did he tell you when this operation will be possible?”

“Unfortunately, not, but we must not lose hope,” added her mother.

“Did you have time to contact my friends?”

“Yes, and they are coming to see you, but they didn't tell me when.”

“Thank you, Mom!”

“You're welcome, my beloved daughter. We love you so much.”

“I love you too.”

Back in court, Jack's trial did not seem to be going well for him. In the courtroom, the motel receptionist had been questioned and confirmed the presence of the accused. Subsequently, Joana Perks described the circumstances that led her to pepper-spray the suspect. As a result of new evidence that the authorities had just found, the Crown Counsel asked that the trial of the offender be postponed for a few days. The judge agreed. While searching the red van, they had found a topographical map on which various letters and numbers were written. The investigators deduced that these must be the places where the murderer buried the remains of his victims without being sure.

The authorities hired workers to dig in the precise locations indicated on the map, and while digging, they discovered the horror! Arms, legs, and human torsos were discovered in an advanced state of decomposition! The scene that was displayed in front of the workers was a pure abomination!

A few days passed before the excavations and expert reports were completed. The trial resumed and the Crown presented the photos

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as new evidence to the court. Seeing the horrific pictures, the witnesses immediately condemned the murderer who was held guilty on several counts and sentenced to death. And so, the worst criminal of all time would be executed, or so it seemed...

CHAPTER 9

A nameless donation

Just hours after Jack's execution, at the hospital where Kelly-Ann was anxiously awaiting an organ donation, her parents were summoned by the board. Of course, contacting them was not a problem since they had been leaving their daughter only to go to eat. Kelly-Ann showed great courage, as it was not easy to fight her fear of the dark, but she seemed to be able to do so despite some relapses. Her parents had decided not to leave her alone anymore, and when they went out to eat, they made sure that a nurse was present in their absence, which unfortunately was not always possible. Before leaving to meet with the council, Falon and Fergus informed her that the council had summoned them.

“We have to leave you my darling,” said her mother in a calm and gentle voice.

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“Why is the board asking for you?”

“We think it's about your surgery,” her father added.

“Maybe they found a match,” Kelly-Ann said with a smile.

“We hope so, but we don't want to get your hopes up, so we'll see what the board says.”

“Yes, you're right, Dad.”

“Listen, your mother and I have asked that there be a nurse near you, but unfortunately that will not be possible,” said Fergus, with a worried face.

“Dad, I thank you for everything you've done for me so far, but if I'm going to be blind for the rest of my life, I'll have to deal with it.”

“Don't say that!” replied her mother.

“Mom, I'm an adult now, so I have to learn to face my fears and trials. I know you mean well. However, it's time for me to take responsibility for myself and my life.”

“But...”

“There are no buts, I'm a grown-up now!” Kelly-Ann said to reassure them that she would accept what was going to happen despite the fear that haunted her.

“Good, very well. Know that if you need anything, we will be there for you,” added her father.

“Yes, I know that, and I thank you. I love you guys!”

“We love you too.”

“Come on, let's go! Go to your meeting if you don't want to miss it.”

“Okay, we'll see you soon. What if...”

“I know, Mom, I know! I'll ring for a nurse to come.”

Fergus and Falon kissed their daughter on the forehead and left. They had been summoned to the large conference room on the twelfth floor of the building. As they left the room, they walked down the hallway to the elevator at the back. When they arrived at the floor where they had been convoked, they recognized the doctor who was waiting for them at the exit of the elevator and invited them to follow him.

“Follow me Mrs. and Mr. Guess, it's in that direction.”

“Thank you!” said Falon.

“Are you doing okay?” asked the doctor.

“Yes, we are fine. I guess the meeting with the board had something to do with our daughter's surgery,” she said.

“Yes, it does!”

“Are you able to tell us more, Doctor?”

“Be patient! You'll be able to know everything in a little while.”

“Sorry, I didn't mean to rush you with my question.”

“No, that's all right. I understand your impatience,” replied the doctor.

They took another ten steps and arrived at the door of the conference room. The doctor opened the door and Kelly-Ann's parents saw the luxury of the room. In the center was a round table of what looked like oak wood, with many leather chairs spread around its perimeter. On the left wall was a bookcase filled with books on many medical subjects. On the right wall, five executives who must have represented the former leaders of this hospital. At the back of this large room, two open windows let in fresh, clean air from outside. At the other end, a room could be seen that gave them visual accessibility through a window that was designed to be used by professionals or translators. Around the table, five doctors sat with a serious look on their faces and watched Kelly-Ann's parents settle into their luxury chairs. Falon and Fergus felt uncomfortable with these stares. The oldest doctor stood up and started talking to them.

“Good morning Mr. and Mrs. Guess. Allow me to introduce myself, I am Dr. Hans Astermann and I am one of the oldest physicians in this institution and the head of the board. I am assisted by the director of this hospital, Dr. Locklai Northside. We

have summoned you to get your approval for a new technique that has been implemented by Dr. Sergei Trusofko.”

One of the doctors stood up and nodded to Kelly-Ann's parents. The man was as white as snow, which made his blue-gray eyes and raven-black hair stand out. When he stood up, Falon and Fergus noticed that he couldn't have been taller than a dwarf. However, he was wearing a white coat that magnified his waistline. He looked at them with an unsmiling face and then spoke.

“We and the members are gathered here to meet you and to explain what this major operation consists of. Of course, we want you to know that because of the risks involved, we have to have you sign papers discharging us from any liability should the operation go wrong. I imagine that Doctor McKerson explained you briefly the risks incurred following this surgical intervention,” he launched while looking at this one with a suspicious air.

“He did, Doctor,” Kelly-Ann's mother replied.

“He told you that this operation is experimental, didn't he,” he added.

“Yes, we know it and we agree to sign this discharge of responsibility,” she said.

“Very well. I'll turn it over to my colleague, Dr. Jeffrey Pattern who is a neurologist.”

Dr. Pattern was the complete opposite of this one, for when he rose from his comfortable chair, Falon could not understand why

this individual had not thought of a career in basketball. Indeed, his elongated stature would have been perfectly adequate for a professional player. Obviously, fate had decided otherwise! This one got up and started to speak in a theatrical way bordering on boastfulness.

“Thank you, my dear colleague, for this presentation. Indeed, I am a specialist in this field. Of course, as a genius, I know a lot about the human neurological system, which is undeniably complex. Without wanting to sound pretentious, I am one of the best specialists in this field in the world. In short, when the doctor told me about his experimental project of implanting the eyes of a recently deceased patient into another patient, I must admit that I was and still am a little skeptical about the effect this could have on a patient. Both physically and psychologically, as we don't know how the body reacts to the new organs implanted. It seems obvious to me, according to the expertise that I carried out during the very first tests, that there will be a chain reaction of the body to the new eyes of the donor. In spite of my disagreement and protest against this experimental project, the board decided to go ahead with it, but hey...”

The doctor's upset face did not seem to affect either the board members or Kelly-Ann's parents, who were willing to do the impossible for their daughter. To follow up on Dr. Pattern's words, the psychologist spoke up.

“Hello, I am the psychologist, Lyn Pei Pong, who will be working in collaboration with Dr. Trusofko and his colleague despite their opposing opinions on this subject. Personally, I believe that given the psychological state of our patient, Kelly-Ann, I must specify with the agreement of my colleague, Doctor Trusofko, that the intervention will have a very beneficial effect. Let me explain,” she said, seeing Dr. Pattern's reproachful look. “I have taken the time to study the patient's file in depth and since she suffers from fears caused by her phobia of the dark, it seems obvious to me that the operation cannot be negative, quite the contrary! I therefore encourage her parents to proceed with this experimental procedure,” she concludes, as she takes her seat in her chair.

The director of Springfield Hospital, Dr. Northside, had not yet spoken a word during the conference, his piercing gray eyes darting from one individual to another. This man with a plump face and white beard interrupted his silence to argue the opinions of his members.

“Dear colleagues and Kelly-Ann's parents, it is my duty to share with you my views on the subject that is closest to our hearts, and which is, of course, the well-being of this young lady. This is the main reason for this conference. We must not lose sight of the fact that the main objective of this medical institution is above all to do everything possible to help patients find their way back to health. However, in the end, the final decision does not rest with

the hospital, but with the patients or, in this case, the parents of our patient, Kelly-Ann. We are here to provide you with the support you need to best accompany your daughter on her road to recovery. Of course, I can't ignore the fact that there are costs involved, but you probably already knew that. Also, I should mention that among the papers, there is a non-disclosure clause of the donor, which means that there would be no possibility of tracing the donor, you are aware of that, right?"

"Yes, we are aware of that and will unequivocally accept this fee for the sake of our daughter," says Kelly-Ann's mother, "and we hope that it will result in recovery without harm."

"All right, with that said, we can proceed with the paperwork without wasting any time," added the director.

"When do you expect to perform the operation?"

"Tomorrow morning, because we already have a donor match," replied Dr. Trusofko in a cheerful tone.

"Fantastic!" added Kelly-Ann's mother.

Obviously, the only opponent was Dr. Pattern. No one seemed to heed his warnings. Kelly-Ann's parents signed the legal documents. Perhaps they were making a mistake? Only time will tell... in the near future...

As soon as they left the conference room, they hurried to their daughter's room to tell her the good news. Kelly-Ann was dozing on her bed when she heard her parents burst into her room.

“Mom, Dad, you're back!”

“Yes, we're here,” said her mother feverishly.

“I feel something in your voice. What's going on?” her daughter asked, a little worried.

“Your father and I have good news for you.”

“Oh yes, what is it?”

“Your operation is tomorrow!”

“Already!”

“You don't agree anymore?” asked her father.

“Of course, I do! I think it's great and who is the lucky donor?”

“We are not able to know that.”

“What do you mean, you don't know?”

“Your mother and I signed a non-disclosure agreement, which means we'll never know who gave you this wonderful donation.”

“I wish I knew,” Kelly-Ann said in disappointment.

“Don't you think the most important thing is that you get your sight back?”

“Yes, you are right. Sorry to have said that to you.”

“Don't worry, we understand,” added her mother.

“I don't know how to thank you.”

“You don't have to thank us, I'm sure you'd do the same thing if you had a child,” replied her mother.

“Definitely!”

“We only want what's best for you, you know that,” said her father.

“Yes, I know.”

“You know what your mother and I would like?”

“No, what?”

“That you make the most of this donation and live a happy life.”

“I will, I promise!” she confirmed.

“All right.”

“I would like you to do me a favor.”

“Of course, which one?” they asked in the same voice.

“I would like that you take advantage of the rest of the day to think of you two.”

“But we...”

“There are no buts,” she cut off. “I want you to think about yourself for a change. Don't worry, I'm a big girl!”

“Well, if you want. Get some rest, you've got a big day ahead of you tomorrow. We'll be there during your surgery.”

“All right, then.”

“We're off! Have a great day!”

“Good day to you both and above all enjoy it.”

“Yes, we promise, sweetheart,” added her father, placing a kiss on her forehead.

They left the room with a lump in their throats. Even though they knew their daughter could fight her fear of the dark, and although they trusted her, they couldn't help but feel that the darkness was still her worst nightmare... at least for now...

CHAPTER 10

Searching for Joana

The next morning, Kelly-Ann woke up feeling feverish. A nurse burst into her room, putting an end to her feverishness temporarily.

“Good morning, Miss Guess. How are you feeling today?”

“To be honest with you, I'm a little nervous, but I try not to think about it.”

“Don't worry, everything is going to be fine,” she said to reassure her.

“I guess you're right.”

“I need to take your pulse and check your blood pressure if you don't mind. But first, try to relax and not think about anything.”

“I think that will be difficult.”

“I understand, but please try and give me your left arm.”

“Very good.”

“Thank you!”

Kelly-Ann tried to clear her head as best she could while the nurse did her job. She struggled to do so.

“Well, I’m done! Indeed, your pulse and blood pressure are above normal, but it’s nothing catastrophic,” she said with a friendly smile.

“Do you know when the operation will take place?” asked Kelly-Ann.

“I was told it would be around 10:30, but as you can imagine, there are always delays in this type of surgery.”

“Very well, thank you!”

“You’re welcome. Just rest in the meantime, and we’ll come and get you ready at least an hour before.”

“Okay.”

“If there’s anything, please let us know.”

“Okay.”

“See you soon!”

“Yes, see you soon!”

The nurse left the room and Kelly-Ann took the opportunity to rest and try to shake off her anxiety.

In another location, Kelly-Ann's mother made breakfast while her husband searched for his shirt and pants.

“Honey!”

“Yes, what is it? I'm making breakfast.”

“Did you wash my blue shirt?” he asked her.

“Yes, darling! It's in the basket in the basement with your black pants. I did the laundry yesterday.”

“Thank you!”

Fergus came down the stairs wearing only boxers. Falon saw him pass and laughed. He looked at her and laughed back. He came up behind her and hugged her while she finished cooking the bacon.

“I like when you take me in your arms, but I admit that in underpants, it is a first,” she threw him taken again of a mad laugh.

“What, you do not find me sexy?”

“I did not say that, and you know it well, but I believe that the time is badly chosen for that, don't you think?”

“Yeah, you're right.”

“By the way, I wanted to talk to you about something, but first I would like you to get dressed, because it's a little annoying for me to see you in underpants,” she said to him by taunting him.

“Okay, I'll be right back. Mmmmm it smells good the odor of bacon!”

“Yes, especially since I bought the bacon with a taste of maple,” she added.

Fergus walked away from his lovely wife and went to the basement while she finished preparing breakfast. Five minutes later, they were enjoying a delicious meal. As they ate, Falon started talking about something she wanted to discuss with him.

“Do you remember the day of the accident?”

“I can never forget it, why do you ask?”

“Well, I wanted to call an old friend from the police station.”

“Why? I don't understand what you're getting at,” he said, puzzled by this answer.

“The exact reason is that I wanted to know if Agent Bartley would be able to help us find the mysterious woman who saved our daughter.”

“I guess he might.”

“Do you mind if I contact him?”

“Not at all, especially if he can help us.”

“All right, I'll give him a call after our meal.”

“Alright.”

They finished their meal and immediately Falon picked up her cell phone and tried to reach him. A woman's voice answered.

“FBI office, what can we do for you?”

“Hi, my name is Falon Okers-Guess and I'd like to speak to Agent Bartley, please.”

“What's this about?” asked the receptionist.

“I need him to give me information about a past event.”

“I'll do that. Can you hold the line? I'll try to reach him.”

“Of course. I'll hold.”

“If he doesn't answer, you'll be connected directly to his voice mail where you can leave a message.”

“Thank you!”

“One moment, hold the line.”

When the receptionist put Falon on hold, she heard the song “*The girl is mine*” sung by the famous pop singer Michael Jackson.

Suddenly, a much less soft voice answered.

“This is Agent Bartley, what can I do for you?”

“Hello Agent Bartley, I'm sure you remember me, I'm Falon Okers-Guess.”

Complete silence, he was stunned to hear that lovely voice again.

“Are you okay, Agent Bartley?”

“Uh... yes, Falon. How's your husband, Fergus?”

“Fine, thank you!”

“I’m sorry, I was a little caught off guard. It’s been so long.”

“Yes, I know.”

“I heard about your daughter, is she okay?”

“Actually, she’s having major surgery today. But yes, she’s fine.”

“It can’t have been easy for her.”

“It wasn’t, but with this operation, everything will be fine.”

“I’m relieved to hear that. And you, are you okay?”

“Yes, I’m better than ever.”

“What can I do for you?”

“Well, I’d like to find the woman who saved my daughter from certain death, and I was wondering if you could help us.”

“I’ll see what I can do, if you have a name, it will help me find her more easily.”

“Her name is Joana Perks.”

“All right, I’ll take care of it. What number can I reach you at?”

“On my cell phone which is 518-555-5452.”

“Excellent!”

“As soon as you have something, you call me back, okay?”

“Yes, no problem. Say hi to your husband and good luck to your daughter with her surgery.”

“Yes, I will. Thanks again.”

“Have a nice day!”

“Good day to you too!”

The agent hung up the line, which ended the phone conversation. Fergus' eyes had an expression of jealousy, because in the distant past his wife had been in a relationship with this FBI agent. But that was long before his daughter Kelly-Ann was born. At the time, all three attended the same college. Between Bartley and Fergus, a competition to win Falon's heart was raging. Of course, in the first round, Bartley was the clear winner of this rivalry, but it didn't last long as Falon realized that although she had feelings for Bartley, deep down she felt more love for Fergus than for him. Bartley was much more muscular than Fergus but did not possess the softness of the latter. That's what had finally turned the tide in her favor! It is often said that love is stronger than the police!

Falon saw the look on her husband's face and understood. She walked over to him to hug him and said in a soft, reassuring voice:

“I understand how you may feel, but I want you to know that you are the one I love. You know how I feel about you and even if I talk to him again, it won't mean anything to me. Trust me, okay?”

“Yes, you are right. I shouldn't have any doubts about how you feel about me for so long. I'm sorry,” he told her with a sense of guilt.

“I want you to know that I don't blame you.”

She placed a kiss on his cheek and let go of his embrace.

“Thank you! I should be proud of what we've done together. Besides, I'm so proud of our daughter.”

“Yes, so am I.”

“We need to get ready to leave soon, because the big moment for our daughter is coming!”

“Yes, it is!”

They picked up the dishes and then Falon put on a beautiful red dress that brought out the beauty of this woman as well as her sensuality. Fergus, when he saw her dressed like that, took her in his arms.

“How beautiful you are!” he said.

“It's only for you that I put myself beautiful,” replied Falon with a radiant smile.

“I know you do.”

“I'd like to do something else, but we don't have enough time. I like it when you hold me and whisper sweet words in my ear. You are so romantic; I want to keep you all to myself. Unfortunately, we have to go. Maybe tonight we will have something to celebrate? Then, I believe that it will be the ideal moment to let you rediscover my body, don't you think?” she says to make him

understand that it was not the desire that she lacked, but rather the time.

“I’m convinced that all will occur well for our daughter.”

“To be honest with you, even if I am a little afraid, I know that you are right my darling.”

Finally, they left the house and headed for Springfield Hospital.

Meanwhile, at the FBI office, Agent Bartley was searching the computer system for a trace of Joana Perks. Nothing! There was no one with that name in the city of Springfield. But Bartley had to find her because he was counting on his efforts to win back the one who had not chosen him and who had taken refuge in the arms of this "Fergus". Of course, he had not said a word to Falon, because he feared her reaction. However, deep down, he hoped to seduce her again. Nevertheless, what he didn't know was that no matter what he would try, her heart was beating only for her husband...

After his unsuccessful search, Bartley decided to talk to his superior, Chief Inspector Doug Jarvis. He left the computer room and headed for Jarvis' office. When he got to the door, he knocked twice, and a voice invited him in.

“You may come in!” replied the inspector, plunged into reading one of his files.

“Hello, Inspector.”

“What can I do for you, Agent Bartley?”

“I have a personal favor to ask you.”

“Let's hear it.”

“I just ran a search in the system for a woman, but she seems to have vanished.”

“Who is she?”

“Joana Perks.”

His face became thoughtful.

“Is there a problem?”

“Normally, I shouldn't be giving you any information about her.”

“And why not?”

“She was the main witness in an investigation so, in order to protect her, she is in a witness protection program, and we had to change her identity and address.”

“I understand.”

“Why are you interested in this witness?”

“To be honest with you, I would like to find her to try to win back Falon Okers-Guess.”

“I thought she was married.”

“She is!”

“But then what's your interest if she's married?”

“Personal revenge!”

“What makes you think you can win her back if she's married?”

“I just know it!”

“I don't really agree with you.”

“I'm not asking you to agree with me because you don't know the whole story, I'm just asking you to help me, that's all!”

“All right. If I give you this information, no one should know that I gave it to you. On my side, I will say that the file has been misplaced, that's all! The murderer against whom she had to testify was executed. So, I don't think he's going to come out of his grave to seek revenge,” Jarvis replied, with a snide tone.

“Thank you!”

“May I say something else?”

“Yes, I'm listening.”

“You've done the impossible for her, but at the end of the day, if she doesn't feel anything for you, what's the point?”

Agent Bartley glared at his supervisor before exiting the office. He took the file and closed the door firmly. As soon as he was out, an anger invaded his body and his soul. In his head, he saw the face of his opponent, Fergus. He would do anything to win this game, even if it meant losing it forever!

At the Springfield Hospital, they were making final preparations for Kelly-Ann's experimental operation.

“Don't worry Miss Guess, everything will be fine. Now try to relax, we'll give you a sedative. When you wake up, this will all have been a nightmare. You'll have your vision back,” said the head nurse, putting on a confident and reassuring face.

“Thank you!”

“Dr. McKerson and Dr. Pattern will be assisting the eye surgeon, Dr. Trusofko, and you have nothing to worry about, as he is one of the best in his field.”

“Thank you for reassuring me,” added Kelly-Ann.

“In fact, miss, I do not need to reassure you, because I know that you are in good hands.”

They walked down the hallway toward the operating room while Kelly Ann's parents arrived at the hospital.

“Hello nurse, we are the parents of Kelly-Ann Guess.”

“All right, let me check my list. “

She looked down at her list to consult it and then looked up again and answered them.

“Indeed! I see it on my list, but because of the risk of contamination, you will unfortunately not be able to attend this operation.”

“Really!” they replied disappointed.

Seeing their disappointed faces, the nurse hastened to add:

“I understand your disappointment and rest assured that we will keep you informed of the progress. Although, on second thought, I think you might want to go to the upper dressing rooms where you can watch the operation in progress. I'll have an assistant take you there.”

“Very well, thank you very much,” Falon added with relief.

The nurse called for an assistant who came to meet them and invited them to follow him. They walked down the hallway and took a small private elevator. The elevator led to a floor with many closed rooms. When the assistant opened one of them, the parents saw a glass case that almost filled the entire wall. Then they saw their daughter lying on an operating table connected to several pieces of equipment. Around her were three doctors assisted by four other nurses who were finalizing the preparation of the drowsy patient. Seeing her in this state, Falon's heart sank and tears rolled down her cheeks. The assistant saw her and tried to reassure her that everything would be okay. Fergus took a handkerchief from his pocket and handed it to his wife. Falon took it to wipe away her tears. Seeing that everything was under control, the assistant left the room.

The procedure took seven hours, but it was successful because Kelly-Ann now had new eyes. Of course, the doctor had told her

that she would have to wait twenty-four hours to find out if her body would reject them.

During this seemingly endless wait, Falon received a call, but did not answer. When she saw the number, she knew the call was from Agent Bartley. She kissed her daughter, who was still fast asleep, and then told her husband that she had to call him back. He smiled at her to show that he trusted her. Falon had to leave the room and go downstairs, as calls were not allowed in certain areas of the hospital. She passed through the reception area and finally ended up outside the building. She dialed Bartley's number and he immediately answered.

“Hello, Falon.”

“Hello Bartley. Good news, I hope,” she said.

“Did your daughter's surgery go well?”

“Yes, very well, thank you!”

“I'm glad to hear that.”

“That's nice of you. So, about Joana Perks, did you find out anything?”

“Yes, but I can't talk about it on the phone.”

“Okay.”

“Can we meet somewhere?”

“Sure, no problem. Where do you want us to meet?”

“Do you remember the *"Dirty Dancing Bar"*?”

“How could I forget!” she answered, remembering that it was there that they had their first date.

“Then, it's okay if I say for seven-thirty this evening?”

“No worries, I'll be there. Don't forget to bring the information?”

“Don't worry about that, I have it in hand.”

“All right, then, see you tonight.”

“Yes, see you tonight.”

Surely Falon didn't know what Agent Bartley's *hidden* intentions were. However, he did know, and as he hung up the phone, the agent felt a renewed sense of hope come over him. Although Falon did not know the bad intentions of this one, the fact remained that she was not stupid! Could he really hope that she would fall for his plan? What plan had he come up with? It seemed obvious that in his head, a revenge of the past was hovering. And if Falon did not fall into his trap, what else could he do? Whatever it was, he would be able to find out soon, very soon....

CHAPTER 11

Kelly-Ann's strange behavior

To the delight of her parents and herself, there was no rejection! Now all that remained was the rehabilitation period, which could take three to six months according to the doctors. Given the circumstances, Kelly-Ann had no choice but to put her studies on hold. She informed the college of her situation, and they unequivocally accepted her decision to take a year off to allow for a full recovery. When Kelly-Ann arrived at her parents' home, she was greeted with a surprise party. Her parents had invited all her friends and neighbors to celebrate her return. Kelly-Ann's vision was blurred, but she could make out some of the people there, including her best friend and confidante, Krystel, who gave her a big hug to welcome her back. In turn, her other friends came to congratulate her on her courage. Meanwhile, in the other room, the neighbors across the street, the Truchmans, were talking with Kelly-Ann's parents.

Suddenly, for some reason she didn't know, Kelly Ann's eyes began to blur more and more, and she was overcome by a sense of anger she didn't know she had. Without warning, Kelly-Ann shoved Krystal, who was standing next to her, and shouted at the top of her lungs:

“I’VE HAD ENOUGH! GO AWAY! GO AWAY! I DON’T WANT TO SEE ANYONE ANYMORE!”

Falon ended the conversation she was having with Mrs. Truchman and rushed to ask people to leave with an apology. Krystal did not understand her best friend's reaction. Everyone who was present left. Seeing their daughter's condition, Fergus and Falon helped her up the stairs to her bed to get some rest. Kelly-Ann realized what had just happened and burst into tears.

“I’m sorry, Mom and Dad... I don’t... I don’t... I don’t know... what came over me,” she said through her shaky breath.

“But... what's happening to me?” she asked, not understanding herself the source of this sudden anger.

“I think you're just tired, sweetheart,” added her father.

“Well, now get some rest,” said her mother, in a calm voice.

“Sorry again.”

“Don't worry about it. Just think about resting and everything will be fine, honey,” said Fergus.

“Thank you for everything!”

They settled Kelly-Ann comfortably in bed and she fell asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow. Her parents left the room with the door ajar and went down to the kitchen.

“Don't you think it's strange how she reacted?” asked Falcon

“No, I think she was just tired. Besides, you saw for yourself, she fell asleep as soon as her head touched her pillow,” he said, smiling.

“Yes, you're probably right.”

“By the way, what time is your appointment with Agent Bartley?”

“At seven thirty.”

“Oh yes, that's right! I forgot about that.”

“Do you remember what I told you yesterday morning before we left for the hospital?”

“Sorry, I don't remember.”

“That if everything went well, we could make love.”

“I remember. Yes, I remember now.”

“So, what are we waiting for to do that?”

“I'm not saying no, but how about we go into the shower first?”

“Great idea!” exclaimed Fergus.

“Anyway, Kelly-Ann is fast asleep, so I think it's a good time.”

“You're right.”

In Fergus' eyes, a sparkle appeared expressing an intense desire that had just been born.

While Kelly-Ann drifted into a deep sleep, her parents took a shower filled with sensuality and moans... the sexual excitement was at its peak as their bodies intertwined with a burning, carnal desire. After their lovemaking, they lay in bed for a few hours while caressing and brushing against each other. This brought them an hour before Falon's appointment with Bartley. When she tried to get up to go back into the shower, Fergus held her back.

“No, stay with me longer, honey,” he begged.

“You know I'd love to, but I have to get ready.”

“Yes, you're right,” he said in a bitter tone.

“Don't you trust me?”

“Yes, I trust you, but I don't trust him.”

“Listen to me! It seems to me that I have already told you. He means nothing to me, it's you that I love.”

“I'm sorry.”

“I'm not hiding anything from you, and you know it.”

“Yes, I know that. I'm sorry.”

“No, it's okay. I'll make this as quick as I can. Since I don't trust him at all, I decided to subtly record our conversation, that way I'll have a proof against him.”

“Yes, very good idea my dear.”

“I'm going to take another shower and get ready.”

“Alright.”

Fergus released his hold on her and let her go. Falon took her shower and immediately went out to get ready. About twenty minutes later, she emerged from the bathroom into the master bedroom. She was wearing a short slate blue skirt with a pretty white blouse and a sky-blue pearl necklace decorated her neck. Falon had a very feminine face, her blue-gray eyes and long black hair added to her charm. She attached to her blouse a brooch in the shape of a butterfly. This object was equipped with a microphone that was connected to her cell phone so that she could record the conversation she would have with Agent Bartley.

When the time came, Falon kissed her husband tenderly and got into the car to go to the appointment with Agent Bartley. She drove along Riverside Boulevard to its intersection and then took the left-hand branch to finally arrive at her meeting point with Agent Bartley. In front of the bar, there was a digital sign announcing the arrival of a Canadian rock band, Nickelback. Falon parked her car and entered. At the front door, there were two security guards. One

of them gave her a friendly smile when he saw her, while the other examined her from head to toe with a look of envy. As soon as she realized he was looking at her, he abruptly looked away in another direction. As Falon walked toward the bar, she saw Agent Bartley out of the corner of her eye, sitting on a bench, sipping a red drink. As soon as he noticed her presence, he motioned for her to join his table. Discreetly, while the agent asked the waitress for another drink, Falon turned on the recorder and pretended to look at the time on her cell phone, then put it back in her bag without closing it completely and joined him. Now all the cards seemed to be in the agent's hands. He had to do everything to make Falon fall under his spell, but he was far from suspecting what was waiting for him...

Falon took a seat in front of him. He saw the butterfly on her blouse but didn't pay more attention than he had to. He gave him his best smile and then they started talking.

“Hello Falon!”

“Hello Bartley.”

“Can I buy you a drink?”

“No thanks, that's nice.”

“You should try this cocktail, it's a "Cosmopolitan" and it's really very good and refreshing.”

“Thank you, but I'm not here to have a drink with you.”

“Euh... yes, I see,” he said, the look on his face changed immediately from a smile to an expression of disappointment.

“Listen, I'll be frank with you,” she said.

“Go ahead, I'm listening.”

“I came here hoping you could help me, not to get anything else from you. I have a husband I love, so...”

“All right, I get it, but I want you to know that I'm not going to leave it at that.”

His face now showed more frustration than disappointment.

“What are you implying?”

“I might as well tell your husband that we had an affair.”

“What is that? Is that a threat?”

“Maybe.”

“Do you really think you scare me?”

“I think your husband doesn't trust you and that's what could work to my advantage.”

“All right, then, what if I tell your supervisor!”

“I'm sorry for you, but Jarvis knows about this and has agreed to give me the file.”

“You mean you and Jarvis are in cahoots?”

“You've got it right.”

“Does that mean that no one else knows about it?”

“That's right.”

“And if I were to inform the FBI of your evil intentions, would Jarvis agree with you?”

“Yes, but to do that you would need proof of our conversation.”

“What if I told you I have it!”

“WHAT?”

Bartley's face turned pale.

“You've understood very well. I'm not the silly little girl you used to date, dear. I'll make you a proposition.”

“Go ahead, I'm listening to you,” he said, his face turned from white to red by understanding that he had just been tricked.

“You give me the information I need, and you return the file to the FBI or else...”

“Yes, yes... I get it. All right, here it is.” The agent handed her the file, which Falon consulted while taking notes on a piece of paper she had just taken out of her bag.

“I thank you for your cooperation.”

“Wait a minute!” he said curtly.

“What?”

“How do I know you won't contact the FBI? I have no assurance that you won't want to do it at some point for revenge.”

Falon looked him in the eye with a small, satisfied smile and replied:

“Very simple! You just have to trust me!”

Then she left. With a disconsolate look on his face, Agent Bartley clutched his head and thought to himself that he had just been caught like a teenager, with his hand in the cookie jar...

When Falon left the bar, she took off the pin hanging on her blouse, put it in her bag. She got into her car and drove off, thinking about this proud discussion. She took the road towards her home.

Meanwhile, her daughter Kelly-Ann was in a deepening dream. Suddenly, she was again in the grip of an anger that she could not control. In front of her, atrocious images passed by. At first, she didn't understand what they were because they were blurred, but more and more the visions became clear... First, she heard what seemed to be a small male voice, but as time went on, it grew louder and louder, telling her, *"Look for this woman who betrayed me, look for her."* Her heart began to beat harder and harder not because she felt fear, but rather because she was invaded by an intense sensation of excitement accompanied by anger in a bestial

state. As if she was not herself anymore and that another person took possession of her state of mind. Not understanding too much what happened to her, she struggled against this force by shouting at the top of her lungs then heard a voice in echo which asked her to wake up: "WAKE UP BEAUTIFUL! WAKE UP!" As she opened her eyes, Kelly-Ann realized she had just had a nightmare and saw her father's face filled with fear.

“My darling! It's me, your father,” he said when he saw his daughter's expression, which was not reassuring since she seemed completely lost.

“Dad?”

“Yes, it is me Kelly-Ann.”

She began to sob and immediately her father took her in his arms to reassure her. He couldn't remember seeing her in such a state. A few minutes passed before Falon returned to the house. When she entered, her husband came to greet her at the door. He told her what had just happened a few moments earlier. His wife was shocked by what she had just heard. Falon went up the stairs to join her daughter in bed. As soon as she recognized her mother's shadow, she jumped out of bed and into her arms and started sobbing again.

“But... what's the matter with you, dear?” her mother asked. She remembered that her daughter had already jumped into her arms in this way, but it was from her childhood.

“Mommy, I'm scared,” Kelly-Ann said.

“No, you don't have to be afraid. We're with you. Everything will be fine in a few days, you just need to give yourself some time, okay?”

“Yes, Mom.”

“If you want to recover, you need to sleep. So, get some rest.”

“I will.”

“Leave your door open and leave your lamp on. That way you'll feel safer and if anything happens, we'll hear you. Sleep well my angel!”

“Thank you, Mommy! Good night to you both!”

Kelly-Ann wrapped herself in her blanket and a few seconds later, she fell into a deep sleep.

A week had passed since that nightmare. Strangely, Kelly-Ann had not had another one. On Saturday morning, she got up and walked slowly down the stairs to the kitchen. Her father was having coffee and reading the daily news while her mother finished making pancakes. She saw her daughter out of the corner of her eye.

“Good morning, my darling!” she said to her in her soft voice.

“Good morning to you both,” said Kelly-Ann.

“Thank you my lovely, you too,” added her father while leaving aside his newspaper to make her a beautiful smile.

“How's your vision this morning?” her mother asked.

“My vision is getting better and better, Mom.”

“Wonderful,” exclaimed her father.

“Your father and I have to go shopping, and I was wondering if you wanted to come with us, since you haven't been out for a week and I think a little fresh air might help take your mind off things.”

“Thank you, but I wanted to ask you something.”

“Yes, we're listening, sweetie.”

“Could I go and meet my friends at the local restaurant like I used to do before?”

“You must be talking about Krystal and company,” her father joked.

“Yes, I am.”

“No worries, sweetheart. You can reach us on our cell phones.”

“Alright.”

The three of them sat around the table and ate breakfast, talking about various things. After they finished their meal, they all went out at the same time as her parents left the parking lot of the house, Kelly-Ann headed for the local restaurant. When she got to the front door, she saw her four friends chatting through the window. When they saw her walk through the door, they came over to Kelly-Ann, happy to see their friend back, who this time seemed to be in good shape and in complete control of herself. They took

turns hugging her. Finally, they sat down around the table and started a conversation, but one of Kimberly's ex-boyfriends approached their table and interrupted them.

“Hey bitch! You've made a fool of me!” he said in an accusatory and angry tone.

His eyes looked like they were throwing knives. Seeing the expression on his face, Kimberly froze in fear.

“Hey, big guy! You disturb us, go shout elsewhere, OK?” replied Janis by rising from her chair and by approaching the neurotic.

The madman jostled Janis who fell on Kelly-Ann. At once, the eyes of this one filled with blackness. She felt rising in her an uncontrollable anger and of a sharp gesture, she moved Janis and seized the hand of the neurotic by tightening it as if it were only a rag. A noise of cracking was heard all around and the individual let out a cry of pain and collapsed on the ground, twisted with pain. Kelly-Ann's voice suddenly became deeper, and her friends felt as if she was in a state of trance.

“YOU ONLY DESERVE DEATH, BECAUSE THIS ONE BECAME MY FRIEND... Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!”

Kelly-Ann lost consciousness and her body suddenly went limp and hit the floor. Her head hit the floor hard, and she blacked out...

A few hours after this incident, Kelly-Ann opened her eyes and realized that she was in a hospital bed. Near her, there were her best friends relieved to see that she finally woke up.

“What happened?” she asked, still a little confused.

They looked at each other, not knowing what to say. At the same time, her parents burst into the room. They saw their daughter who had just woken up and immediately their worries were alleviated.

“Mom! Dad!” she said when she saw them.

“Yes, we are here. Your friends told us briefly what happened to you. Don't worry, your doctor assured us that you'll be better by tomorrow, but he has to keep you here for 24 hours to make sure that you won't have any after-effects.”

“I don't remember anything!”

“It's normal, sweetie, you had a little concussion, but it will get better,” said her father.

“Your father and I are going to leave you for a few minutes with your friends, we have to go sign some papers at the hospital admission.”

“Don't worry, Mr. and Mrs. Guess, we'll take care of her while we're waiting for you,” said Krystel.

“Alright, thank you. That should give you a little time for one of you to tell her what happened,” Kelly-Ann's mother suggested before leaving the room.

“We will,” Janis added.

Kelly Ann's parents left the room and headed for the entrance while her friends told her what had happened in their own way. None of them really understood what had caused Kelly-Ann to be in the state she was in, but they began to doubt that the aggressive reaction of the other day had something to do with what had just happened a few hours earlier...

Obviously, this led to several questions. Were their doubts well founded? What had caused her to be in a trance? Why were her eyes filled with darkness? For the moment, the mystery remained, but very soon, a light would appear at the end of this dark tunnel...

CHAPTER 12

In the eyes of evil

When visiting hours were over, the floor nurse came to tell Kelly-Ann's friends and parents that it was time to let the patient rest. Everyone left and took turns hugging Kelly-Ann. At last she was alone! Strangely, she felt that deep inside her, something had changed, but she didn't know exactly when. Whatever it was, she felt a sense of anger that did not seem to belong to her. The more she thought about it, the less she understood what was going on. With these dark thoughts, Kelly-Ann fell into an agitated sleep.

Everything around her seemed camouflaged by a fog. Suddenly, she heard a cavernous voice from the depths of hell! "*She's the one who killed me, I have to find her and cut her throat!*" said this evil voice. This verbal violence did not come from her. When the fog cleared, she saw herself in a red van, watching a woman across the

street. She could feel the excitement and desire throughout her body. Suddenly, her heart began to race as she remembered seeing this woman, but she couldn't remember where or when. Without really knowing, something had changed in her vision... She took a few seconds to concentrate more, and the answer came to her head like a flash of lightning "**the angle of view!**" she understood. But why was she hearing this voice that did not belong to her and why had the angle of view changed? Abruptly, she found herself in a room with the same pretty woman. In front of them, a succulent meal accompanied by two glasses of wine. After the woman had taken a few sips, she saw her fall asleep. She got up and installed her on one of her shoulders then went down at the back of the motel where a red van was parked. Kelly-Ann finally realized that what she was seeing was not her, but a vision from someone else. Immediately, her vision changed, and she found herself in front of a house, put a box there and got back into her car. She parked several meters away from the house and waited until she saw a man leaving his home. He saw the box and just as he was about to open it, she woke up with a start in her hospital bed. The nurse had just burst into her room. She saw that Kelly-Ann was all sweaty and looked like she had just had a nightmare.

“Are you okay, Miss Guess? she asked.”

“Uh, yeah, thanks, I'm fine, I had a nightmare and a hot flash. Don't worry, I'll be fine.”

“Would you like me to bring you a glass of water?”

“Thank you, that would be nice.”

“Alright. I'll be back in a few moments with your glass of water, and I'll take your vitals.”

“Okay.”

The nurse returned almost immediately. She handed her her glass and took the opportunity to take her pressure and pulse, noticing that her patient had an abnormally high pulse and pressure.

“Your pulse and pressure seem a little high to me, but I suppose that's the effect of your nightmare,” she concluded.

“I guess it is.”

“I'm not going to give you anything right now, but if it persists, press the red button and I'll come in and give you a little sedative. Okay?”

“Yes, thank you!”

As the nurse left her room, Kelly-Ann couldn't help but think about the nightmare, if she had one! She tried to go back to sleep, but only half succeeded. The rest of the night was a long fight between what she hoped, the voice which did not belong to her as well as the insomnia which did not cease hammering her until the early morning...

A few hours before Kelly-Ann made this strange dream, her parents had driven back her friends. After they were returned each

one at her place, Falon threw a worried glance to her husband and said to him:

“Honey, I don't think Kelly-Ann is not doing well.”

“I think so, too.”

“Her behavior has changed dramatically lately.”

“Our daughter would never have reacted so aggressively. I don't understand it.”

“I don't either.”

“I have a funny feeling.”

“Oh yes, which one, dear?”

“Although I do not believe in it, it's as if she had become another person... as if someone had taken possession of her.”

“Come on, honey! There is no such thing! You're delirious!”

“I know, you're probably right. I'm sorry.”

“No, it's okay, I understand that your anxiety might make you imagine things like "possession of another's soul", but believe me, that only exists in horror and fright novels. Nothing more. I assure you.”

“Indeed, it wouldn't make any sense.”

“Just to reassure you, we'll go see the doctors who did the surgery before we bring our daughter home and I'm sure it won't be anything like that.”

“Good idea!”

“Excuse me for changing the subject, but I would like to know if you have managed to reach the woman who saved our daughter?”

“Darn! I had completely forgotten that one!”

“It's normal my dear with all that happened.”

“I will contact her as soon as our daughter comes home.”

“All right, then. Would you prefer that I accompany you when you go to look for Joana?”

“No, honey, that's nice, but I'd rather you keep an eye on our daughter.”

“Yes, don't worry, I will.”

“Thank you!”

“Are you hungry?”

“Yes!”

“All right, let's go eat before we go home.”

Kelly-Ann's parents decided to stop at Tim Horton's for coffee and a delicious steak and three cheese sandwiches. They took their time and talked about several topics.

The next morning, the couple ate their breakfast and headed back to the hospital. Just before taking their daughter home, Falon and

Fargus asked to see the doctors who were taking care of her. Unfortunately, the psychologist was out of town for a conference and the two specialists had taken their leave. That left only her general practitioner, Dr. McKerson, and the old doctor, the head of the hospital, Dr. Amstermann. Kelly-Ann's parents decided to meet them in a small conference room that was normally used for meetings between doctors. They entered the room.

“Good morning, Mrs., and Mr. Guess!”

“Good morning, Doctor,” they replied in one voice.

“Please take a seat,” added Dr. McKerson.

“Thank you, Doctor,” Falon replied with a shy smile.

“What can we do for you?” Amstermann asked with a jovial smile.

“We'd like to talk to you about our daughter, Kelly-Ann,” said Falon.

“Of course! Dr. McKerson and I are here to answer any questions you may have.”

“To tell you the truth, we're a little concerned.”

“Is there something wrong with your daughter's new eyes?” said the younger doctor.

“No, it's nothing like that, I assure you. Our daughter is very happy with this invaluable organ donation. Everything is going great on this side” she added.

“So, what's the problem?” asked McKerson, puzzled by this answer.

“Well, what we mean is that lately our daughter's behavior has been *"strange"*.”

“What do you mean by *"strange"*?”

“She seems to be falling into a trance and an anger that is not her own and is seizing her.”

“You mean something is controlling her? Is that it?”

“You could say that, yes.”

“Dr. Amstermann and I do not have the experience and knowledge to answer your question, but we could find out, if you want.”

“Yes, thank you!”

“Do you have any further questions?”

“No, we do not. Not at the moment.”

“Alright. If you have any further questions or concerns, we are here to answer to the best of our knowledge while our two colleagues are away,” added the old doctor.

“That's nice, we thank you.”

“Tell your daughter we wish her the best of luck.”

“Thank you, we'll tell her.”

“Have a good return back home.”

“Good day to you both and goodbye!”

Falon and Fergus walked down the hallway to pick up their daughter and return home quietly. Once they arrived home and while Fergus was talking to their daughter about the evening he had planned for them, Falon took the opportunity to lock herself in the bathroom and tried to reach Joana. To her regret, she couldn't reach her, but left a message with the house number while explaining who she was and the purpose of her call and Falon hung up. When she came out of the bathroom, her husband saw her, and she nodded to him that she had not reached her.

Two days later, while her mother and father were away at a party with friends, the house phone rang, and Kelly-Ann answered.

“Good evening!”

“Good evening, I would like to speak to Falon Okers-Guess, please.”

“Sorry, she's not here. I'm her daughter. Can I take a message?”

“Yes, could you tell her I'd like to meet her privately? I live in Forrest City now and I would like her to meet me at the Moctezuma Grill restaurant at 737 N. Washington Street, around seven o'clock, I won't wait a minute longer.”

“All right, I'll tell her. Who is it from?”

“Tell her I'm the former Joana Perks, she'll understand,” then she hung up.

By hearing this name, Kelly-Ann fell in a state of trance and at the same time, her eyes became of a dark black. Then, an immense anger which did not belong to her came to invade all her body. In the depths of her soul and in her head, she felt that something had taken her place. A diabolical voice from the depths of hell resounded in her head: *"The hour of vengeance will soon come, I will have your skin Joana and not just your skin, your head too! Haaaaaaa!"* Then, on these words filled with darkness, Kelly-Ann became aware that her soul sank in a nothingness where any control of herself became impossible. Her soul was now imprisoned by a scarlet fire and an ink-colored cloud, from which the so-called Butcher of Springfield was emerging again to live to take his revenge. The young woman's conscience tried to scream, but no one could hear her from the depths of this hell...

CHAPTER 13

A dark ending

When Kelly-Ann's parents came home, they thought she had fallen asleep in front of the television watching a movie, because the screen was filled with snow like when a channel closes. The parents did not want to disturb her and let her sleep on the couch. However, although physically her body was lying down, the black soul of an evil being had taken its place, leaving no chance for this victim to resurface. Having emerged some time before, from the depths of this young woman's new eyes. Its goal was very simple: revenge!

The next morning, Falon came to wake up her daughter, but was surprised to find that she was no longer on the sofa. "*Where did she go? Probably in her room,*" she thought. She went up the stairs to see if Kelly-Ann was sleeping peacefully in her bed but found

that she wasn't. She saw on her bed what appeared to be a small note that read:

Mom and Dad,

I'm sorry I didn't say goodbye before I left. I wanted to tell you, but seeing that you were sleeping deeply, I didn't want to wake you up. I want you to know that I am very grateful for everything you have done for me and I thank you very much. I have left for Forrest City, I will contact you soon.

Kelly-Ann,

I love you very much xxx

Falon couldn't understand why her daughter had gone so far away without telling them. She would have thought she would have gone back to Springfield instead, which was not the case. *"I guess she needed to get away from us for a while,"* she thought. However, she had no idea what was on the horizon, for her daughter, in the grip of this demonic entity, would do anything to achieve her ends and to have her revenge satisfied...

When Fergus got up, his wife informed him that his daughter had left the family home for Forrest City. He was surprised to hear this, but both he and his wife understood that their daughter, while appreciative of their help, must surely need some time alone. Falon heard her cell phone ring and immediately answered.

"Hello."

“Hi Mrs. Guess, this is Dr. McKerson, I'm with the doctors who were involved in your daughter's surgery. I've told them about our conversation. Do you have a few moments to spare, because what we're about to tell you may shake you up?”

“Sure, I'll put my cell phone on speaker so my husband can hear the conversation,” she says intrigued.

“Yes, I think that's a great idea. Are you both sitting comfortably?”

“Uh, yes, Doctor. You're starting to scare us.”

Falon stared at her husband and realized that an irrefutable concern had appeared on his face.

“It seems that during the organ transfers, an inexplicable mistake was made,” he said.

Kelly-Ann's parents could hear the desolation and incomprehension in his voice.

“What are you implying?”

“I am going to leave to my two colleagues the care to explain you well what happened and what this could engender, hypothetically, of course!”

“Hello to you both, I am Dr. Trusofko and I am the one who performed the experimental surgery.”

“We're listening, Doctor.”

“As Dr. McKerson mentioned to you, a mistake was made when we received what was to be an organ donation from a woman in her early thirties who died just hours before we performed the

surgery. According to our research, and this is my point, it appears that her eyes were mistakenly mixed with another donor.”

“But how can this be possible?”

“We don't know.”

“Let me continue, Dr. Trusofko, I think I'm in a better position than anyone to explain what follows and what it may imply.”

“All right, I'll gladly pass it on to you, Dr. Pattern.”

“Thank you! First of all, I wanted to thank you for your time, and we hope you will indulge towards our hospital.”

“We want to believe that, but it depends on whether our daughter's life is in danger, and I think you will understand.”

“Yes, I do! As I had already mentioned to the board member, I was against the idea of this project, because in my opinion, there were too many variables on the tests that my colleague had performed for this operation to be conclusive. In addition, ocular neurological functions are very complex and can lead to psychosomatic reactions of the patient, therefore imponderable, and can lead to catastrophe and psychological and psychic debalancing.”

“Sorry, but could you simplify your terms? We are not doctors, so please explain in less scientific words.”

“Sorry! I am truly sorry. In simpler terms, the operation we performed on your daughter could lead her to a mental disorder.”

“WHAT?”

“Indeed, she could suffer from psychological imbalance. Tell me, did she mention to you that she was having nightmares?”

“Yes, why?”

“I think it's more serious than I thought.”

“I have a very simple question, Doctor,” said Falon's husband.

“Yes, which one?”

“If I understood correctly, the reason that could cause all this disorder and nightmares would be related to the donor, wouldn't it?”

“I'm afraid so, unfortunately,” the doctor replied, expressing in his voice the regret that he had not insisted on the surgery, knowing full well that the risks were too high.

“So, you know who his eyes come from?”

“Yes, we do.”

“Tell us who they belonged to.”

“Yes, look, I don't know if you remember, but you and your wife signed a non-disclosure agreement.”

“Do you know what? I DON'T CARE ABOUT THIS PIECE OF PAPER, DOCTOR!” he said, raising his voice more and more.

“TELL US WHO THE DONOR IS OR ELSE...”

“All right, all right. Please, calm down. You don't have to threaten me, I'll tell you. The donor... he... his name was Jack "The Butcher" Burnston,” he finally said.

“YOU WANT TO LAUGH AT US, DON'T YOU?” shouted Fergus, knowing full well the reputation of this barbaric murderer.

“I wouldn't dare, Mr. Guess. I would never dare, believe me,” he said bitterly.

“And now what? What do you think you can do to help us?” Falon asked in a much more conciliatory voice than her husband, understanding that the doctors were not really to blame for the organ transfer error.

“Take her to the hospital in a hurry, we'll do everything we can to find her another pair of eyes.”

“We can't,” said Falon.

“May I ask why?”

“She left this morning for Forrest City.”

“Are you able to reach her?”

“Yes, I will call her as soon as we hang up.”

“All right, then do it quickly and call me back as soon as possible and we'll make arrangements for an emergency intervention.”

“Great!”

“We're waiting for your call.”

“No problem.”

The doctor ended the conversation. Without waiting another minute, Falon tried to reach her daughter, but unfortunately, it automatically went to her voice mail. She decided to leave a message.

“Hello sweetie, it's mom. I would like you to call us back as soon as you get this message, it's urgent!”

Then, she hung up hoping that this one would call her back quickly. In her husband's eyes, she saw the concern that confirmed that this discussion had deeply disturbed him. He wasn't the only

one, because Falon also felt that something terrible was going to happen. Nevertheless, she did not know to what extent what she felt was not very far from reality, because indeed, in a few hours, Kelly-Ann would commit the unforgivable...

Falon and Fergus couldn't do anything at the moment. While they waited for their beloved daughter to get back to them, they decided to spend the rest of the day at the mall and buy a few more groceries. No sooner had they pulled into their parking lot than the answering machine picked up and a female voice was heard.

“Hi Mrs. Guess, I left a message for your daughter yesterday and I just wanted to make sure she told you about it. We are scheduled to meet tonight around seven o'clock at the Moctezuma Grill restaurant at 737 N. Washington Street which is in Forrest City. Remember, I want you to come alone, please. Thank you!”

Then she hung up.

After shopping, they decided to return home. As Falon walked in the door, she saw a small red light flashing on the house phone. While her husband carried the bags into the kitchen, she pressed the button to hear the message. As soon as the woman finished, everything in her head fell into place like a puzzle about to be completed. At that moment, Falon realized that this woman was in great danger. Looking back, there were too many things that connected her to their daughter and to Jack. First, the intervention of her eyes, her drastic change in behavior, the fact that she had not

mentioned the message to her, and finally, her daughter had left for Forrest City, which coincided with where Joana was living now. Her husband looked back at her. He saw that her face had turned white.

“Are you okay, honey?”

“No, I'm not okay. Not at all!”

“Tell me what's going on.”

“We're going to Forrest City now,” she told him quickly.

“Why Forrest City? I don't understand.”

“I'll explain on the way. Come on, let's hurry!”

They stormed out of their house, got into their car and drove off at full speed, knowing full well that their daughter's time was running out and that they had no time to lose.

Meanwhile, in Forrest City, Kelly-Ann, in the grip of the demonic killer, booked a room close to the restaurant so she could see that Joana was coming. She entered her room and ordered roast chicken with orange sauce and vegetable rice. A few minutes later, the man on duty knocked on her door. She let him in, tipped him and closed the door behind him. Then she put her meal in front of her and sat down on her bed, which was very close to a window where she could watch the people coming and going from the Moctezuma Grill restaurant. After this delectable and succulent meal, Kelly-Ann, aka Jack, decided to take a little nap until her next victim arrived at the appointment.

In the meantime, her parents were trying to navigate the main streets which were congested by traffic. Obviously, tension and worry were visible on their faces. Would they get there in time? Would they be able to save the life of this woman who was in grave danger? What would happen if this murderer succeeded? So many questions haunted their minds.

An hour later, Kelly-Ann awoke from an uneasy sleep, for in her body, her soul had tried to emerge from the depths of her being to regain control, but in vain. He seemed far too strong for her. She had no choice but to face the fact that this murderer was going to commit a murder without her being able to fight him. Now, she didn't exist anymore, only he remained...

Finally, the hour Jack had been waiting for arrived and he saw Joana enter the restaurant. *"Hey, hey, now no one can stop my revenge from being satisfied,"* he thought. In the appearance of Kelly-Ann, Jack left his room to take the elevator down to the first floor. He went along the corridor of the hotel and before going out, he looked around and saw an alley where he could hide the shelter of the passers-by. He crept to this place and waited patiently. Deep down, he knew that this *"working girl"* would be easy prey. At least, that's what he thought.

A few minutes later, Joana left the restaurant in frustration. She had just been stood up. Nothing could make her angrier. Without

really thinking about it, she decided to go to the alley where the murderer had been waiting for her for several minutes with the firm intention of taking revenge. Lost in her thoughts, Joana did not notice that she had just passed close to him. She continued on her way when suddenly she heard the voice of a young woman.

“Hey, you, working girl!” said Jack to get her attention.

Joana was startled by Jack's appearance as a young woman.

“Do we know each other?” she asked him.

“Ohhhh yes, very well indeed!”

“Sorry, but I don't think I know you.”

“If you don't remember, I remember you.”

“But who are you, miss?”

“If I said red van, would that mean anything to you?” he said arrogantly.

“I don't think it's funny, young lady.”

“And Jack "the butcher", does that mean anything to you now?”

“Are you crazy or something?”

“No, I am Jack even if I don't have his body anymore.”

“But?”

“You have only to look well at my eyes and you will see.”

She approached Kelly-Ann and when she saw her eyes, she understood.

“NO! IT CAN'T BE! YOU WERE EXECUTED IN FRONT OF MY EYES!”

“Yes, I know, but what you didn't know is that I donated my eyes and it's this girl who inherited this magnificent donation... Ha, ha, ha!!!”

Jack approached her and at the same time she took a bottle of pepper spray out of her purse and sprayed his eyes. The murderer screamed in pain and Joana took the opportunity to run away. Although his vision was temporarily blurred by the product, he saw her escape and, while staggering, he went after her. Joana was wearing a green scarf and the killer grabbed her. She struggled like a devil in holy water but stumbled and fell to the floor. Jack jumped on her and grabbed her neck to strangle her. At that very moment, Joana tried her best to get her fingernails into the murderer's eyes and he immediately let go. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a car speeding towards them. She had barely a fraction of a second to avoid the impact, but not Jack. He was thrown into the air and hit the wall of the building hard. The two passengers in the car got out. One of them was a woman. Her eyes filled with tears, she walked over to Joana and said:

“We had no choice!” she sobbed.

“You saved my life!”

“Yes, just as you had saved the life of our daughter,” she said while looking at the body close to them which was covered with blood.

“You mean?” she realized.

“Yes, that's my daughter lying on the ground.”

“I... I do not know what to say to you,” she said stunned.

“There's nothing more to say,” said Falon, while her husband tried to console her.

Moments later, the paramedics arrived and found Kelly-Ann dead. Nothing is more terrible for parents than to lose a child. There was no hope for them to see their daughter alive again. That was the sad truth. In the eyes of the evil one did not exist anymore, it had thus sunk and carried away an innocent in the nothingness where reigned darkness, and this, forever...

About The Author Mario Côté

Mario Côté, is a versatile writer in his writing styles. He discovered his passion for writing through the animated evenings with his daughters of



the game Dungeons & Dragons. A few years later, he decided to put his passion and prolific imagination to work by writing books and imaginary worlds. All novels from this writer are available on his website: <https://www.mariocote1966.com/bio>. Please take note, only the first novel of the black series of thirteen chapters is available in English for right now. The others could be coming soon in English!

