

Cruel Justice

“The only way for me to describe this man is to call him a true hero. When we need a case solved we go to him. When someone is missing we go to him. If I can’t find my remote I feel that it is him I should call. But in all seriousness I do not know what I would do if Dan never joined the force. We got here together and we have moved up the ranks together. Hell, we even married two sisters. He is my best friend and there is no other man who I would love to give this award to more than Dan. I’ll shut up now because you all came here to see him, not me. So without any more waiting, Dan I ask you with great respect to come up and accept this award.”

The crowd roared as Dan, visibly uncomfortable, walked up the stage to accept this honor. The crowd was filled with fellow officers and detectives in the force. He did not have a family; the force was his family. He spent all of his time solving whatever mysteries were given to him. He finally made it to the stage and clearly wanted to be anywhere but there.

“Thank you everyone for coming and thank you Finch for being so kind,” said Dan. “You guys all know that I hate attention, but I truly do appreciate this honor. I am glad that I have made an impact on all of your lives. Thank you.”

Dan left the stage and went out the back of the crowded room. Everyone was used to his antisocial behavior, but always attributed it to the stress he dealt with on a daily basis. It is not easy for anyone to be around such gruesome acts and be happy to see other human beings, as it is those of the same species who are committing these sadistic crimes. Dan was an expert at solving murder cases that would have gone cold otherwise. He had a knack for it ever since he first became a detective. The job was perfect because he was able to be rational in an irrational environment. He could think clearly when viewing a dead body, or even a room full of bodies, as was the case with the Milton murders in ’98. He never talked about a case once it was solved,

which explains why he was so uncomfortable when he was approached about being given the award. He prefers to sit in his office and receive the cases by himself, go out and solve them by himself, then celebrate by moving on to the next one.

Dan was leaving when Finch stopped him.

“Hey are you doing alright?” asked Finch.

“Look Finch, you know I hate any attention. I appreciate you doing this, but I have to go. I’ll see you next week.”

“You know I just worry about you, Dan. That’s all.”

Dan did not respond as he put on his faded veterans hat and left the station. Finch watched him walk to his car before he went back in to join everyone else who had come. There was a cake to cut with Dan’s name on it, but they would have to eat it themselves.

Dan got into his fifteen year old Chevy, his personal “Mystery Machine”, and made the hour-long drive home. It always confused those new to the force why Dan lived so far away from the station. He had been on the force for the past thirty years but never moved closer. He had the most job security of anyone in the county, but he simply chose to live far away. It may have been that he was comfortable out there, or maybe he just did not want to have to interact with his fellow officers outside of work. He used to spend much of his time with Finch and their wives when they were all younger. This changed once Laura, his wife, was brutally murdered about two years after they were married. This event is what drove Dan to become so dedicated to his work. Ask anyone in the force and they will say that there is no one more committed to solving crimes as much as Dan. That is why so many are confused when he refuses to talk about cases once they are solved. Finch has told the younger officers that every case Dan solves reminds him of Laura, so he tries to brush away the memories as best he can.

Dan arrived home and stepped into his eerily quiet house. It was spotless as usual, as Dan could not stand even the slightest of stains anywhere in his house. He went straight to his room and changed out of his dress clothes that he was forced to buy for the night. He hated wearing a tie, but Finch insisted a tie be worn to accept the award. He could not stand Finch anymore, but did not have the heart to let Finch in on this knowledge. There were few guys nicer than Finch, and being mean to him was a crime in itself. For all the bitterness Dan expressed he did his best to not direct any at his former close friend.

The day was a long one and Dan was about to go to sleep when the sole phone in his house rang. He hated technology and still owned the same caller-ID-free phone that he has had for decades. He answered to hear Finch's voice on the other side.

"Hey Dan hate to bother you but there is a couple who were reported missing tonight during the award ceremony, so I wanted to let you know."

"Thanks Finch I will look into it," said Dan as he immediately hung up the phone.

Dan was prepared for this call. He went into his closet to retrieve his wallet. He sighed, as he was just about to lie down to go to sleep, but in order to hold up his reputation he could not wait. He put on his shoes and walked to his basement door while taking out his wallet. He pulled out a key and inserted it into the slot in the door while turning the knob. The darkness from the basement was given some life when he turned on the switch that lit up the single light bulb at the bottom of the steps. Each step he took down the wooden staircase echoed throughout the basement that was held together by gray, unpainted cinder blocks. Dan was not one to worry about the appearance of his basement as no one he knew went down there, in the rare occasion of anyone he knew actually coming to his house.

The award winner made it to the bottom of the staircase and flicked on the switch that lit up another single light bulb leading to a steel door. The key worked for this door as well and Dan entered. Another room, another light switch. This time it resulted in the entire room being illuminated in a light that resembled the “white light” often described by those lucky enough to escape death. Dan smiled as he entered and took in the sight. What he saw was nothing unusual for him: two glass boxes, standing about six feet tall and four feet wide, each containing one person. One man and one woman. He did not know their names and never planned on learning them. Both of these boxes contained a small hole in the front so those inside would be able to breathe. A few seconds after the lights came on both the man and the woman woke up.

“Why are you doing this?” screamed the man while the woman lay crying.

“Look, I am not here to go through the typical strategy of you begging for your life. I am tired and simply want to get some sleep, so if you could just be quiet that would make this easy for all of us.”

“You want me to make this easy for you?” said the man who never faced such terror in his life.

“If you had the decency to listen to me you would know the answer,” said Dan who had faced much worse terror than what was before him.

“You are crazy, man. How could you expect me to simply let you kill me and my wife without me saying anything We don’t even know you, you psycho!”

“See, this is what I was talking about. Can you please just be quiet and let me do this. I do not have time to listen to you complain. I had a rough day and I just want to go to bed.”

Dan went into a cabinet located inside the room and pulled out his favorite rifle, and began to load the chamber with two bullets.

“Wait, please wait.”

“Sorry, son. You and your wife are missing and need to turn up.”

“We are missing because we are here! What is wrong with you?”

“Do you think I like doing this? Do you think I like the fact that I have to kill you? I hate it. But it’s the only way that I can keep up. These young guys are threatening to take my job and I can’t let that happen.”

“What is your job? Are you a hit man? Yeah that’s what you are! Who wants us dead, just let me know. I will pay you double whatever they paid you.”

Dan had a good laugh with that line.

“A hit man? Do I look like a hit man to you? I’m a police detective, a very famous one in fact. I received a reward for my success. I received it tonight actually.”

“So you are telling me that you are a police detective, but you are killing me? You are insane.”

“Trust me, I am not insane. I am just trying to keep my job, and you keep making it so difficult. So please, just be quiet so we can get through this.”

“When I get out of here I am going to kill you.”

“You have not been listening have you? You are not going to get out and I will tell you why. You and your wife are currently missing. That is because I drugged both of you last night when you went out to that awful bar next to the dealership on Cohle. I figured I could find a few people who wouldn’t be missed and sure enough you two showed up. I bought you both drinks and you were foolish enough to accept them. Did you really think that I just happened to bring you both drinks at your table as a random act of kindness? Your stupidity alone should have you killed, and it will once you finally let me get on with this. But I suppose you deserve a fair

explanation, even though your memory will cease to exist once I put this bullet through your brain. The drugs kicked in about an hour after you left and I took the liberty of entering your house through the back door. Should have invested in a home security system. I then brought you both here. Here is where it gets good. You are going to kill your wife. You will then be so upset about it that you will kill yourself. I will discover you in your car parked next to the lake in the park located approximately twenty-seven minutes away from your house at 3 p.m. on Tuesday afternoon. Her body will be floating in the water. You will have a full bottle of pills on you that shows you must have been crazy, but your girl over here was too nice to let anyone know. I have plenty of leftover pills lying around. They don't work for me, so no worries my friend you are in luck. Maybe some sympathy will be thrown your way, but I doubt that will be the case. I will once again live up to my reputation and bring a sense of security to this area. That is what the newspaper will say. However, I am actually going to kill you both here and plant your bodies in the proper places. Don't worry, I have been doing this for years, it will look perfectly authentic. Is that a good enough explanation for you? I would like to hurry this up."

The man stood in shock as he stared at Dan. The woman continued to cry but the man could not comprehend what he was hearing.

"Why are you doing this?"

"You son, clearly have a listening problem. I told you, I am doing this to solve the case of you missing and keep my job," said Dan.

"But why? You can just solve cases like all other detectives out there. Why do you have to kill us?"

"Do you really think that I would have a job if I did not do this. And don't get ahead of yourself and think that I am just doing this to you. I have been doing this for years and you are

not some special case. Every crime that I have solved in the past twenty-eight years has been committed by me. Who better to solve a case than the one who commits the crime? I can choose the plot of each story, and write the conclusion. I consider myself more of a storyteller than a murderer, as you might call me.”

“How can you have any sense of honor if you *kill* when your job is to bring killers to justice?”

“Do you really think I enjoy killing, cause I don’t. I had to kill my own wife just to give myself a name. I was a no name, a loser, but once I solved the murder of my own wife I became someone. I became the cop who put all emotions aside to solve the murder of his own wife. I felt bad that that poor man had to die in order to take the blame for me, but he was living a meaningless life anyway. If anything, I saved him from his boring life and gave him a name.”

The man did not know what to say. He just stared blankly at Dan. It was clear that there was no escape from this current position and that his life was nearing its end. The woman continued to cry and the man knew that he could do nothing to help.

There is something about the look in a man’s eyes when he realizes it is all over. Dan may have noticed if he was not so used to the sight.

“So are we ready here. I would really like to get to bed because I am just exhausted.”

The man did not change his expression at all. The blank stare remained. The anger in his face had gone away, as his face was entirely devoid of emotion. The woman continued to cry, as she had done the entire time since the light was turned on.

“Great! And just as a friendly reminder, you are going to kill her and then kill yourself. I am sorry that I have to make you the bad guy, but I really don’t feel like having to find someone else to be your killers, because I am simply too busy to do that. To be fair, I will kill you first so

you do not have to watch her die. I feel that it is only fair considering you actually seemed to want to try and live tonight. Well once again, sorry but I have to do this.”

“Rot in Hell.”

“Come on, son. Enough with the clichés.”

Dan took the gun that he had been holding and aimed at the man’s head through the hole in the box. The man continued to stare directly into Dan’s eyes. The shot rang out throughout the basement as the man slumped down inside the box. Dan then walked over to the woman’s box just a few feet away.

“Dear, please stand up so we can get this over with. I am really trying to get this done as fast as possible.”

The woman did not move an inch as she continued to cry, lying in a ball on the floor of the box.

“Look, I really do not want this to hurt but it’s going to if you don’t stand up.”

The woman remained on the ground but looked up at Dan, which gave him just enough time to quickly point the gun at her head and pull the trigger.

Dan hated the next part of this process. He opened up the boxes with the same key he used to enter the basement and the room. He made sure to avoid any contact with the bodies, as he would do that on Tuesday morning when he would plant the bodies in order for them to be “found” by him. All he did was take out two small vials from his pocket and collect a small amount of blood from each box, which was dripping down the back wall of each glass box. He then went through the routine of shutting off the lights and locking the door to his “home office”. He went into his kitchen and opened a drawer that contained a journal. He opened it up and wrote down the details he would have to remember for the discovery of the murder on Tuesday.

The journal was just one of many that he had collected over the years. The first entry in his first journal, which he has saved in a separate drawer, documents the murder of his wife and the apprehension of the framed murderer. He completed the entry and was satisfied. He decided to celebrate early by going into his refrigerator and pouring himself a glass of his home-brewed beer. He only enjoyed his beer after each murder he committed, as it was the only time that he was in possession of his ingredient that set his beer apart. He took out one vial, which contained a few drops of the man's blood, and poured it into the first glass. He then did the same with the second vial and the second glass of beer. Dan smiled as he took a sip from each glass. He would call Finch in the morning to let him know that he had uncovered a few leads on the case of the missing couple, but would need the weekend by himself to continue on. Finch would then commend him for his work and continue to be oblivious to what was going on. Maybe another award would come Dan's way, but he did not care much for awards. As long as he had an income to continue brewing his beloved beer and as long as he continued to obtain his unique ingredient, he was happy.