

Death of an Arrogant Man

It was Taylor's arrogance that offended Brady. The disdain he sprayed all over the attorney/client meeting room when he first walked in at County. Brady didn't like him from the start but played the role and made pleading eye contact during their first meeting. Taylor acted as if he was Brady's one hope. Said so. Used those very words. Said any jury looking at the gruesome evidence would convict Brady in a second. A second! That they'd tie him to the gurney themselves and fight over the syringe.

And when Brady tried to tell him the evidence was planted, Taylor held up his hand as if what Brady had to say was not important. Wouldn't listen. That whole first meeting was Taylor talking. Yammering about how lucky Brady was it would be pro bono. How Taylor normally wouldn't waste his precious time on a case like this for under a guaranteed million.

It took Taylor a week to come to the conclusion on his own about the evidence, and another day to decide that that would be the strategy he'd use.

Brady liked the surprise on Taylor's face when the lawyer found his former client sitting in the leather chair behind the mahogany desk. It was after midnight. The "not guilty" verdict had been rendered only hours earlier.

"How the hell you get in here?" Taylor asked.

Brady shrugged. "Maybe I'm not as dumb and helpless as you think."

Taylor slapped his briefcase on his desk and poured himself a drink from the bar; an end-of-day ritual he'd bragged about each time he had left Brady to be handcuffed and taken back to his cell.

"So then. Why are you here?" Taylor asked. "Come to thank me?"

"Not quite," said Brady. "I've come to kill you."

For a moment Brady had his attention. Taylor stopped stirring his drink and looked across the desk.

"Well that would be stupid," he said. "I just saved your life."

"Which would make me the last on the list of usual suspects, wouldn't it."

Taylor took a sip. "And why would you want to kill me?"

"It was a partnership," Brady said. "You never understood that. You won the trial because of the way I planned things out. And you never acknowledged it or thanked me."

Taylor laughed. "I won the trial because it's what I do. Besides, you were innocent. Once I knew that for certain, it was just a matter of helping the jury understand how you'd been set-up." He finished his drink and poured another.

"So it was all you?" Brady asked.

Taylor flopped in the chair across from Brady and raised his glass. "Anyone else and we'd be watching you being wheeled into the chamber right now."

"I killed her," Brady said.

"Sure you did." Taylor swirled the ice in his glass.

It was Brady's turn to smile as he walked Taylor through how he'd done it. And how he'd planted the evidence that would free him. Brady enjoyed watching as Taylor slowly realized he'd been conned. Brady saw it in the muscles around his mouth, how they went slack. Although some of that was the drug.

"And now I'm going to kill you," Brady said, "because you don't give credit where it's

due."

Taylor didn't laugh this time. He looked nervous and was starting to sweat. He wiped his forehead with the back of his hand then let it fall into his lap.

"You won't get away with it."

"I'm the last one with a motive," Brady said.

Taylor closed his eyes. Brady gave him a few minutes to fall asleep then tied the plastic bag over his head. Nice and neat. No mess for anyone to clean up. Such a different modus operandi from the last time. Brady took Taylor's keys then slipped down the stairs into the garage. The vanity plates made it easy to find the car. Brady moved it a good dozen blocks and left it parked illegally in a tow zone near a subway entrance. It would give the police a deceptive clue. He tossed the keys into a storm drain.

"Arrogant bastard," Brady said as he crossed the street.

"Mr. Brady?" a voice said behind him.

Brady turned. A man was leaning out of the driver's window of a pickup.

"Charles Brady?" the man asked again. He held out a wallet. "You dropped this back in the garage," he said. "Glad you stopped. Didn't think I'd catch you."

Brady took the wallet. "You sure it's mine?" he asked looking up and down the street, checking for potential witnesses.

"Yeah, found your name in it."

Brady held it for a moment as if he were checking its weight, buying time while he figured a move. "Thanks," he said.

"Hey, no problem," said the driver. "Glad to help." And before Brady could stop him, the man was gone.