

A Dying Quest

by
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Sophia shouted as she heard the gunshots and saw Ricky stagger back into the room and fall. She heard running footsteps and knew that his attackers were running away.

"Ricky, Ricky!" she called out.

There was no sound and Sophia switched on the lights. Her son and the baby girl were crying. There was blood all over Ricky and Sophia started to shout.

"They've killed Ricky, murder, they've killed Ricky."

Neighbors rushed to her assistance.

"Sophia, Sophia, what happened?"

"Jesus Christ, they've killed Ricky."

"I don't know what happened. I heard a knocking on the door. I told him that he shouldn't open it, but he never paid me any mind. Just as he opened the door, I heard the gunshots. Then I saw him stagger back into the room and I started shouting."

"Your name is Stenneth Rhoomes and you are Sophia's first baby father. Then it's you who killed the man. He took away Sophia from you?" Sergeant Reid asked.

"Imagine, they just shot the woman's baby father. You are one of her baby fathers and you are on the scene of the crime with a gun. You were going to kill the man who is dead or Sophia?" Corporal Bilton wanted to know.

"What are you doing with this gun?" Sergeant Reid inquired.

"A man begged me to hold it for him."

"You heard that, Bilton. So you are not a gunman then?" Sergeant Reid asked.

"What was the man's name who gave you the gun to hold?" Bilton put in.

Stenneth went dumb.

"You know what I feel, Bilton. It was the two of them who were supposed to murder the man, but the other man couldn't wait on him."

"Are you sure it wasn't somebody else he was going to stick up?"

"A man just begged me to hold his gun for him," Stenneth insisted.

"You are imagining things. You are under arrest for illegal possession of firearm," Sergeant Reid told him.

Sophia cried that day when Ricky was buried. She was to cry at Stenneth's trial as he was sentenced to ten years in prison. Her second baby father was dead and her first baby father was in prison. A year later she took up with a man by the name of Bradley West.

She was six months pregnant when she received a note.

'Time is longer than rope.'

She decided to ignore the note.

Her first child with Bradley, a boy, was three months old when she received another note.

'You are living with a bad man.'

Again she ignored this note. She really didn't know what work Bradley did, except that he was at the racetrack nearly every day. He told her not to worry. He always had plenty of money. He told her that he was a security consultant. He did a lot of undercover work. Sophia had to depend on him for the maintenance of her three children. Three years after Stenneth went to prison, she had her second child for Bradley, which was a girl.

They were at home one Friday night when Bradley said.

"Sophia, the guy, Stenneth, will soon come out of prison. I don't want you to have anything to do with him."

"I have a child for him. If he comes and want to see him, I can't stop him."

"Suppose he wants to be friends with you again?"

"I left Stenneth and was along with Ricky before he died. I just feel that it was he who killed him."

"Lots of people feel that way too. Anyway, he still has a couple more years to go."

"I'm sorry that up to now they haven't found out who killed Ricky."

"Nobody but Stenneth did it. He was trying to hide the gun, but the police caught him with it."

"The police said no shots were fired out of the gun they caught him with."

"He could have hidden it."

They had moved and were living about five miles from where the tragedy of Ricky's murder took place.

Bradley refrained from telling Sophia that he had been getting messages. The last one read.

'I soon come a road.'

"Stenneth will soon come out. You know that it was he who killed Ricky. I hear that he still loves Sophia and that he's swearing after you," a man called English told Bradley one day.

"I am not afraid of Stenneth. Every night I sleep with my gun. If he sends men after me, I'm ready for them."

Sophia was at home one day when there was a knock on the grill. It was Ricky's father, Gilroy.

"Mister Gilroy, what are you doing up here?"

From Ricky died, his family had treated her like a stranger.

"The man that you live with now, did you know him before you met Ricky?"

Sophia turned the question around in her mind.

"What kind of question is that, Mister Gilroy?"

Mister Gilroy got up.

“Up to now the police haven’t found out who killed my son. They say it’s not Stenneth who did it. Yet they found him there with a gun. He knows who killed Ricky but he doesn’t want to talk.”

“Mister Gilroy, I don’t know what to say. Even though I live with a next man and have children for him, I still miss Ricky. But I can tell you that it was after Rickey died that I met Bradley.”

“I am not stopping until I find out who murdered my son.”

After Mister Gilroy left Sophia began to think. Stenneth would want to come and look for his son whenever he came out of prison. She couldn’t stop that nor could the police. Bradley wouldn’t want him near the house. She feared that something bad was going to happen.

From her high school days guys had been fussing with each other over her. She remembered what happened when she was in Grade Ten. Delroy Jones had burst Patrick Hugh’s head with a bottle after he saw her talking to him. She couldn’t believe it as she and Delroy were not even friends. He had tried to befriend her but she had told him that he was too quiet. Her parents had been furious with her and wanted to send her to a different school. She and Stenneth became friends in Grade Eleven. They were always quarrelling because of the rumors being spread by her enemies that she was sleeping around. In the last term in Grade Eleven she got pregnant for Stenneth. She did her exams as the pregnancy hadn’t begun to show. She didn’t graduate, and couldn’t go on to sixth form.

She was virtually ostracized by her parents and other relatives. She had to go and live at Stenneth's parent's home until she had her baby. Then she heard the rumors about him and other women. Nerine Darby came to fight her over him. They had rolled each other on the ground until neighbors parted them. They both had cuts and bruises all over their bodies and had to seek medical attention. Nerine sued her for assault, but she countersued her and the judge asked them to compromise the case.

When she left Stenneth, she didn't have anywhere to go but Ricky took her in. He was probably five years or so older than her and had built this one bedroom house on his parent's property. Stenneth had warned her that he wanted her back, so any man she went to live with was only baiting up himself.

Sophia looked at herself in the mirror. She was still beautiful with long curly hair. Her only job had been as a basic school teacher when she was living with Ricky. From Ricky died, she never worked again. She was fully dependent on Bradley to support her and the children. Suppose something should happen to him how would she manage to support herself and four children?

When Bradley came home that evening she brought up the subject.

"I would like to go back to school to finish up my schooling."

"How many subjects do you have?"

"Five but I don't have English or Mathematics. If I get those subjects I could go to teacher's college."

"So how are the children going to manage?"

"My mother says that she will pick them up in the evenings for me."

"All right, I will give you the money then."

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