

Two Short Mystery Stories
By
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Story #1: In my Hand

Story #2: Lost Me! Found Me!

**In
My
Hand**

1.

I have a recollection of holding something important in my hand but I couldn't figure out what it was. The only thing I knew was it was something close to me. It may sound like an insomniac movie where the main character forgets all his past just because of sleep deprivation. But it wasn't the case with me.

I woke up with a heavy dose of sedative. I could realize that my eyes were opening slowly, involuntarily. There was a huge LCD screen fixed on the wall, almost touching the ceiling, in front of me. The host in the reality show was trying to come up with some funny punch lines to manipulate their viewer which wasn't funny at all. I tried to get up but half of my body was not properly moving when I noticed numerous strips of bandages tied all over my knees and my left hand was carefully placed inside a sling. I could see a small remote on the table that was attached to the bed I was kept. I didn't even know which hospital I was in. I took the remote and pressed the button to browse for a channel that matches my interest. Meanwhile, a nurse came inside the room to ask if I needed some help. Her attire was inexplicably befitting that I instantly fell in love with that elegant beauty. The door looked as a frame of a painting when she entered. Having an unexpected sore throat, I tried pushing my breath harder enough to deliver a proper response for her but then, I just nodded to signal "Yes!" Even the dress of a nurse looked so comfortable when she was inside it.

I asked her, "How did I end up here?" She told me I had a destructive accident which my wife couldn't survive in. The more she spoke, the more unpleasant it felt in my bones. I was the only person they could save as she went on. I wished her words were as serene as her but time wasn't on my side. She was about to ask me how can she help me, I instructed her to turn off the TV as well as the room light. Her elegant nature darkened when she turned off everything around me. As she closed the door, I could feel the night oozing through the window and sharing a part of its darkness with me. The silence of the night was so telling about the flow I was having in my blood that I felt I was one of it.

All I could do was remember her face. I missed her so much that I hated this feeling of missing her. I don't want to miss her; I want her in front of me beside my bed holding my hands. I never felt so wordless to describe how I was feeling each moment in that dark room that I could even number them. I never imagined that someone's memory could have such pounding effect that was hammering my brain invariably. I wished I was dead too. Maybe the last thing I was holding in my hand was her hands.

2.

After a long, four days in the hospital, I was finally discharged. I knew I had some long-term problem with my brain because of the accident. But I didn't give much attention to that because I didn't care.

The same old house was waiting for me to open its door that had been locked since then. After standing for a while before the gate, and observing the entire lineament of the house, put all my weight on the oaken door consuming the entire wave of silence. Trying my best to keep up with my posture straight, I slammed the door producing multiple echoes throughout the house. Her absence had turned down the house into soulless structure. My own house wasn't communicating with me as if it has been restricted to do so. The pumps in my heart were audible. Everything was so visible inside, which I never took any notice of. Those frames with the picture my wife and me were the one that I refused to take because I disliked being sketched by any means. These frames were the only left pieces of memories that I was able to hold into my hands. Small pieces of art which I never took notice of were as elegant as the nurse who looked after me. I chuckled. My wife really was a hidden artist who altered all the setting of the house and turned into a masterpiece.

I was healing at my own pace, that's what my nurse told me, when she left one Friday morning. The following day was as dead as I was. I kept telling her that I don't need any more checkups but she didn't listen. She told me, she has to, at least, do it for formality sake, which I understood instantly. That is one of the several reasons why hospitals look so dead. She was the different nurse from the hospital, a rude one. I was silently wishing for the one that I met in the hospital.

Hospitals usually make me question about the motive and intentions of the medical people on their treatments. Some doctors, even though, they know the direct cure won't provide the direct facility, instead, they will take a long way just to earn some extra expenses. I know, they are regarded as the life-savers and I am not talking about everyone of them. Some of them are really devoted towards their duty. Well, I am well aware

of my habit of finding the worst in everything that makes me skeptical, even, about the devoted ones. I don't know the source of it but yes I am a negative person which I accept dearly and I am happy to live with it. And as a normal human, I resist change.

I sat on my couch, after she left, and turned on the TV to get rid of the sea of silence. After switching from one channel to another for several minutes, one of them grabbed my attention. It was a news channel portraying my face accusing a murder of a lady. "What the hell!" I baffled. I waited for a while to see if it really was my face. As I noticed "Graham Atkinson", written in big bold letters, below the image, further confirmation wasn't needed. Without further explanation, the reporter jumped into another topic.

Obviously, I couldn't believe what I saw. "The news was fake", as I considered it for the first time. And then, I began to rewind my memory to see if I could remember anything that corresponds with the news. But all I could remember was our accident. We both met the same accident but the news said otherwise. It reported that I shot my wife in an alley. "What the hell is wrong with these channels!" I exclaimed.

I could feel my lungs requiring more air to breath and my heart acting abnormally. I could think of nothing when they told the lady, in the image, hasn't been identified yet because of her distorted face. I might be a negative person but it is more towards skepticism not cruelty. I cannot be that cruel. I realized that silence of the room was far better than those sounds coming out of that reporter's mouth. I turned off the TV and sighed behind my into my contemporary couch. I could feel the sweat on the surface of my back pressing the sponge behind me. Wondering, if I was really a murderer, which I didn't believe, I grabbed my cane, stood up stumbling and took a flight, leaving the door open, into the December rain.

The sound of each drop shattered the silence inside me. The storm inside me made the outside storm look so weak that I was feeling a winner against the nature around me. I did not have anywhere to go which made me discover myself into a small park near my residence. I was trying my best to remember anything I could, and then followed by a concussion which resulted in severe headaches.

After trying to control myself, I remembered having a close friend but couldn't recall anything more. I couldn't even sit there for any longer. My anxiety was pushing my entire body and I was going along with it. I noticed a café, which was about 5 minutes far from the park. I was exhausted and confused and couldn't even wait to order a latte.

Every nerve was accelerating inside my head and every pound of breath refusing to enter my lungs. I was breathing through my teeth. With a queer feeling of being observed from the surrounding, I rushed inside my house with shaky feet and few liters of sweat when I heard my phone ringing as if it was going to detonate.

3.

I didn't go out for a few days. I was alarmed to be seen in the public after last Friday's news. Maybe all the people walking on the road might have known what had happened but they were always as quiet as they have ever been. My confusions and doubts were supported by the silence of my neighborhood.

Public is always quiet until they are pushed to speak. I know that. But, for me the case was different.

I wish I could go to the café across and chat around with the people there. At any moment, I might encounter someone who could have seen the news and recognize me.

It was a gloomy Wednesday and I was sitting on a wooden chair in front of my closed bow windows. I could see a small portion of my garden followed by a narrow pitched road enclosed by two pale pavement across which was a warming cafe. The cafe was the closest to my house. I guessed if they know about my case. Maybe all my neighbors know it and are just pretending.

"Who cares!" a thought crossed.

I could hear my phone ringing since last Friday. Everyday at least two rings had become a tradition. Today, again, it rang at around 5 pm.

Maybe the person calling on the phone might have something for me, some information, as I had been guessing since the ring that I first encountered. I checked my caller id and dialed the recent one. It seemed that someone has been deliberately trying to be in touch.

At the second ring, a familiar voice picked up the receiver and sounded worried after uttering a few words. I was annoyed by the feeling that I don't remember the face even after several trials. I quit trying to remember his face when it started to kick me from inside my head.

The voice introduced himself as Braxton. I asked Braxton to meet me wherever and whenever possible as he sounded dearly intimate. He wanted to see me. I did not feel comfortable at first but after he forced me to believe that he was my old friend when he described my house in a better way than I could. I felt a little calm in my heart and, then, I agreed.

It was 8, when he gave a ring from outside the main gate. He was holding something in his hand, looked like a wine bottle and an extra box. I opened the door. I finally realized that, I could recognize that face even from a mile which was waiting for me outside the main gate.

He entered, congratulating me as I was alive and expressing his deep condolence to my wife. He described my wife with few fine words as if he was closest to my family. Tranquility I felt in my nerves after seeing a familiar face after so long made me feel careless for a while.

He opened the packet he brought in. It contained some grilled chicken and a bottle of white wine because I didn't like the red wine as my companion reminded me about myself. The conversation went on until I asked about the uncertainty I had with the news I saw. He paused for a while. Whatever followed after his clearing the throat was more appalling than what I had encountered on last Friday news reporting.

He came up with a narration after calming me down. He, hesitatingly, started by saying, I had shot a woman for some unknown reason that only I can recall. Few days after that, I had an accident that killed my wife.

He didn't want to put a lot of pressure on me, I understood that by his gestures but he wanted to ask me if I intentionally planned the accident. Before he said anything else, I yelled out a few bad words at him for whatever he was thinking and going to say. He calmed me down and told me to take it easy. I told him, "I didn't kill anyone. Someone must be framing me up". My head ached as if it was bleeding from inside and I told him to leave. It is not that I don't remember anything, a few things might have erased but I could still remember his face and a few things from my past.

He told me to calm down patting on my shoulder. I told him to leave immediately.

Following Friday, 14th December, 2012, I went to the place where my accident occurred. It wasn't difficult for me to know which place it was because of the advancement of technology. The place where my accident occurred was none-other than the famous *Lyell Highway of Tasmania*. The residents were well aware of that accident which I knew when I asked one store guy from a convenience store while I was buying a pack of cigarettes.

The tricky part was, I don't belong to Tasmania. I took a flight to Tasmania from Sydney despite my doctor's recommendation. How on earth my accident occurred here?

I didn't tell Braxton that I was in Tasmania because my intuition doesn't let me trust that guy anymore.

I was Googling the exact spot with my new mobile that I bought the day before. I went to the place that Google directed me. There were few deep marks as if someone took a quick turn. I assumed if it were made by my car just before the accident or maybe by some other vehicle. I am being more skeptical than ever, I realized. I walked further a while as I saw there was another turning.

"Let's suppose the first marks were made by my own car". In the next turn, I again found the same type of deep and identical tire marks. I wondered why I was driving so fast. Also where was I going so fast? The highway was beyond the scope of my eyes so it was difficult where I was heading towards. After a while of walking, not a single house was visible, just a few trees and bushes.

I came up with my first conclusion. Maybe we were going to visit the Mountain and it suddenly rained and I had to drive quickly. But I am not that stupid to drive quickly in rain in those slippery roads. My conclusion failed for the first time.

Or maybe my brake failed when I was driving. That was more promising inference than the first one that led me to take the quick turns. My body started giving up as I wasn't healed properly to walk for such a long hour but my curiosity persisted. For that moment I quenched my thirst trusting the conclusion I reached. I decided to stay there for a week in a nearby Hotel called Hotel Crossroad Epic.

I hadn't visited the alley yet where the woman was shot, whether I did or someone else did, I don't know. "After this", I said to myself.

4.

It was a bright day after so long. I was walking on a busy street. Suddenly, I was hit by an epiphany of a woman being shot. My head ached. Her Face covered with blood. Holding an Astra A-60 on my hand, all I could remember was her cold body.

“It cannot be”, I aroused and realized that it was just another dreadful dream. Grabbing the basin in front me and looking at the mirror. “What should I do?” I was perplexed. I looked into the mirror and asked, “I don't believe this..... Do you?” My own image kept staring at me. After a while I couldn't see myself and I went back to my bed.

How am I supposed to reach the end?

Due of all the confined thoughts and a burning hormone flowing around my chest, I was getting hopeless more than ever. I cannot live forever with this fear. I must do something. How I am supposed to solve this!

It was already Tuesday and I was still in Tasmania. I haven't figured out anything even after the investigation I did in the place every day. Each day brought more frustration and obsession. I was dubious about anyone investigating the case.

I approached one little shop and asked if the shopkeeper would be familiar with any sort of recent accidents on this place. He was a middle-aged person who told me in his typical accent, “Yes! I was here when it happened. It must be the biggest sound I have ever heard in my entire life. I have never heard such a blast. Everyone who rushed to see what happened. We were really scared. We also heard that some lady died in that crash and some guy lying on the corner. Some people from the crowd called the ambulance and he was taken to a nearby hospital. I nodded while he was speaking. And he stopped. “Have you heard anything about that accident after that day”, I asked. “Yeah once it appeared on a news channel given by *Channel 10* but I didn't give more focus into it. It is a police case you know and I don't want to get into trouble.”

I wanted to ask more questions but after what he said, I just thanked him and turned away from the shop. There were few people who were giving me some queer looks. One guy looked for me for a while he

was standing by a wooden post, blowing up a ray of smoke. He looked like an interesting guy. I went near him and asked if I could take few minutes from his life. He replied, "Yeah", keeping his cool.

"Do you know about any recent accidents here?"

"Yes! It is the biggest one ever occurred in the *Lyell Highway*", he said.

"What do you know about the accident? Do you happen to look at the guy?" I asked.

"For sure! I was the one who called the ambulance."

"Wow!" I said. After managing my throat, I asked him, "Can you please tell me everything you know?" He asked me for 500 bucks to confess.

"I know who you are. You were the one in the accident. Man, I know you jumped from the vehicle and killed that lady." after taking money from me.

I gave him a huge sudden blow to his face and held him by his collar saying, "I loved my wife. I would have never killed her f**king bastard and I am searching for the cause of the accident."

Then, I pushed him with a huge impulse that slammed him on the post where he was leaning before. As soon as I turned away he shouted, "Then why the hell you jumped out of the car without saving your wife?"

I stood there for a while and killed him in as many ways I could think of in my mind. Without turning around I left the place and headed towards my room thinking I shouldn't have approached that rude fellow.

It was 9 o' clock, night. I called Braxton. As soon as he picked up, he expressed his anger and, consequently, sounded concerned about where I was and why I wasn't picking up the phone. I lied to him saying, "I am at my friends house and I will come tomorrow".

I couldn't stay there any longer. I booked a flight for the next day.

He arrived at my house with an annoyed face. After a glass of white wine, he started telling me about his workplace. He made me aware that I also used to work there but it just lasted for 2 weeks but then I had killed that woman. We didn't talk much that night. So he left.

The next day, it was already 7am when I woke up. I went for a walk. Jogged for a while. I felt a quite healthy. I sat on a nearest bench at a park,

for a while, staring at the street where people already started seeming busy walking towards their workplaces. There are so many people on this planet but all have different faces and unique stories. The creator must be a genius. I wondered for a while.

But then I had a different thirst that needed to be quenched. So instead of seating there, I visited Braxton's workplace. It was a Motorcycle workshop and Braxton has given his own name to it. He hadn't arrived but everything looked so familiar and why shouldn't it? I, myself, used to work here. I waited for a while until someone arrived.

I smiled and greeted a guy, who was approaching me, but I didn't get a similar response. With a narrow brow he asked me why I was here. I told him I came here to see Braxton. "Yes! This is his workshop, but not the place to meet him. You can leave!" that didn't feel good. From behind a voice called me, "Hey! How are you? How come?" looking surprised, there he was, Braxton. I acted as if I was in a hurry so I told him not to go inside and talk for just 5 minutes. He told me to wait for a minute while he went inside. "Let's go!" followed after he came outside and took me to a nearby cafe. He told me to be quick as he had someone else to meet.

"Please help me solve this! I really didn't know what to do. I am really in trouble man. What should I do? You are the only person I know man..." I was going on continuously when he suddenly interrupted. "Wait! Look! I will do whatever I can but you need to be patient. Cops aren't your friend and inside that place nobody will welcome you after what you got yourself into. Your case is being investigated. If you haven't done anything, why worry man."

Those words did not need any more medication.

5.

It was a gloomy Friday. Millions of thoughts were torturing me one after another.

Maybe I told her to jump but she hesitated. Who knows what happened? Everyone now thinks I killed both of them. And I don't know the truth whether it was me or somebody else. And who is the second lady!!

Someone must be framing me profoundly and here I am helpless and holding up a damaged brain. I could hear that boy yelling why I didn't save her. "It was an accident". I threw a glass at the mirror whose annoying image was standing before me. I hated everyone and everything. Nobody liked me. Everyone thinks I am a murderer. Screaming at nights had become as usual as sleeping itself. I, forcibly, sat onto my bed and took a few shots of whiskey I had on the cupboard.

"I am not a murderer. I didn't kill anyone." I was murmuring to myself.

I finished the entire bottle of what I was drinking and fell asleep.

I was waiting for a headache to wake me up, which it did indeed, and all I could remember was the same question, "Why didn't I save her?"

I flipped up. I must solve it. I was determined. I remember Braxton telling me not to go to the cops as they weren't my friend. I didn't care. I woke up. I noticed the blinking clock beside me. It was already 11 am. Without even brushing my teeth, I rushed towards the nearby police station.

Narrowing my brow, I went inside. I looked untidy. I directly went to the desk and said, "I have a few questions." But before I could say anything after that, I saw their reaction to see me.

"I know you", he said.

"But you know nothing about me", I said, "I have been framed."

"Wait for a while until I show you something and just take a seat." the police was polite.

I waited for a while. One of the cops approached me with a large file. He sat to my right. Before even opening the file he told me, "I am going to show you what you did".

He slowly opened the file. The first page contained all my details including the crime I had committed. The second page was filled up with pictures from the scene they have extracted. Pointing to one picture, "This is the lady that you killed. You may now say we are wrong and how the hell did we know that." He said. He then showed me the picture of a weapon and told me, "that gun is with us and it has your fingerprints. She was killed when she was coming towards you, I guess, you know each other. And the most interesting thing about this case is, we could not extract any CCTV footage because it was hacked by someone, maybe you. After a few weeks, you had an accident where you survive but your wife didn't. Maybe both of the ladies had something common that you wanted to erase. And you killed them both. So don't be clever with us and tell us everything that happened and remember whatever you say will be used against you."

A cold chill passed my body. Then I took a long breath because I knew I had to remain calm to fight this.

I told him everything I remembered since the first day I opened my eyes in the hospital which I dearly regret now because they thought I was lying. *Killing two women*. My head began aching so bad, I couldn't explain anything further. I went unconscious.

When I woke up, I was on a cold bench in the same police station. Holding my head on one side, I woke up. The same cop told me to go to my house and take rest until everything is settled. He also told me that they are thoroughly investigating everything they could and if I was a murderer I could even face life sentence.

That cop was good but I didn't like it when he told me I was under observation wherever I go so not to play hacker with him.

After walking down the stairs towards the pavement, I took a cab.

I saw two missed calls from Braxton. I called him back and told him everything that happened that evening. I told him, "I am coming to your house because I can't sleep in mine". He agreed.

"Thank god the cab driver doesn't know me otherwise he would have refused to take me in", I told Braxton after reaching his home. On his instructions, I entered his house. "A masterpiece", I described as soon as I entered. I told him, "you don't seem to work in any motorcycle workshop.

Is this the first time I am visiting this place? Its colossal.” he giggled and told me, “No!”

The second thing he uttered, after we both took our seats, was, “why did you go to the cops after my restriction?”

“I was frustrated”, with a loud voice I replied.

“Alright. I can understand but they could have put you inside forever”, with his head tilting rightward which was quite familiar.

Without saying anything I got up and said, “Can we drink something? I really had a very long week.”

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