

Homicide: The Game

Presents

Painseeker

“Day in Replay”

by Geoffrey MacIntyre

Technically it was August 18, 2000. It was 1:15 a.m. I usually don't count it the next day until I wake up. While I was waking up to answer the ringing phone, I had been asleep for less than an hour. After a few rings, I realized I was alone in my house. Otherwise, Sharon would have answered it.

I tried to reach past the pillows to the phone at the head of the bed. I felt nothing but air. I opened my eyes and found myself reaching out past the foot of the bed. Flipped one eighty on the bed again. Damn, I was drunk. The phone droned. Righting myself, I stopped the ringing. My voice was whiskey raw, “Yeah?”

Crying. Followed by two short gasps for air. Then more crying. I blinked my eyes open again. Maybe I hadn't picked the phone up yet. Still, I tried again, “Hello?”

The gasping sound again. This time followed up with, “The son of a bitch!” There was a brief return to crying, snuffed out by a growling curse.

I had never heard her cry before, but I knew that cursing. “Sharon, what's wrong?”

Her composure returned, barely, “The son of a bitch finally did it!”

“Kyle? What happened? What's going on?”

“She's dead, Geoffrey!” She was gasping again. She stopped herself again. “Jesus Christ! She's dead and that son of a bitch did it!”

This was not really happening. This was a nightmare born of whiskey and my dashed dreams. Dreams dead months ago, but no one told me. Weakly, “Raychel?”

“Kyle killed her. The police were here when I got here. They’re talking to him now. I think he’s confessing.” That guess turned out wrong and then some.

My attention was turned otherwise, “You’re at his apartment? I thought you-“

”Sorry, Geoffrey. I had to look in on her.” Four words bounced through my head: Right instinct. Wrong time. In Sharon’s business, regret like that lasts a lifetime. Problem is, they last your lifetime. Not your client’s.

She was feeling it already, “I’m going to tell them everything, Geoffrey. He can’t get away with it!”

I don’t know if it was chivalry or anger that made me say it, “I’ll be right there.” Sharon snapped, “No, Geoffrey. Not in your condition.”

“I’ll have a driver bring me over, “ I assured her. I knew who to call. “Stay there, okay?”

“Sure.” She sounded uncertain.

“I love you.” Why did I say that? I did love her. But why did I say it then? Do you remember the first time the person you are with told you he/she loved you? It probably wasn’t right after he/she told you a close friend had just been murdered.

She took me off the hook, “Get here soon, Geoffrey.”

I hung up the phone and looked at the clock. 1:18 a.m. After I spoke with the police, it would definitely be tomorrow. Sleep or no sleep. It would probably be closer to 6:00 a.m. when they finished with me. After that, I might as well just go to work.

I rolled off the bed, started to grab my clothes, and dropped them again. Better to show up in fresh clothes than yesterday’s rumpled outfit. I briefly considered burning those clothes. Bad luck never washes out. Worse, it spreads in the laundry. Damn, I’m drunk. I tried to rally myself for the effort. Won’t do Raychel any good showing up in

a drunken fog. Clear the cobwebs, Geoffrey. Focus. Get new clothes. Rewind my mind.

August 17, 2000. I show up at work at 7:00 a.m. Same as every morning. Before going up to my office, I walk the studio level. Studio 4 is still in need of repairs. (Ken Kincaid had better get moving on those repairs. They are his responsibility.) Studios 1 and 6 have all-nighters going deep into overtime. I check in on them, make sure they're happy, and see if we can get them anything. That's my policy. You work on your project hard. I'll take care of the rewards. I am using it to build credibility back for Terror Trax. Acts hear about hard-working Terror Trax bands being treated well, and more acts follow. Casually and loudly throw out a couple of lazier bands, and the tide stems. Now only the hard-working ones flow here. Repeat as needed. Slowly simmer until one band finally hits it big and hard. Then reap rewards and continue building. It's not a business plan. It's a recipe.

Finish walking the studios and take the elevator to my office. Very Feng Shui. Minimal meets functional. It creates the impression that my time is important, and the person entering should get to the point quickly. It seldom works. My morning is awash in wasteful in-person meetings and productive phone calls. Near noon, I am again questioning why I have an office. I picture a revised work schedule: Come in, walk the studio level, leave, call executive assistant from the car, make orders, eat lunch at Spago, and look important. I smile and fight the urge to vomit. I can't even stomach the image. Work is pre-programmed in my matrix. I'm in California, but not a Californian.

Two to noon and in enters the janitor. Sergei Brosovsky is the only person who keeps as regular a schedule as myself. New day. Same conversation.

"Morning, Mr. MacIntyre."

"Good morning, Sergei."

He does a brief once over and by the time I give up to leave for lunch he is finished.

“Lunch, Mr. MacIntyre?”

“Yes, Sergei.”

We’re out the door together. Me and Sergei. Executive and the spy. I don’t know why but I should have known. At the time I didn’t know that while I left for lunch, Sergei would go down and let Raychel and Kyle into the building through the back door and they would proceed to the relative secrecy of the “defunct” studio 4. That was Ken’s conspiracy and he ran it right under my nose. I hate him, but I’ll admit one thing: He is one brave son of a bitch to pull that stunt.

Fully clothed again and I’m on the phone calling for my driver. The phone rings twice and he picks up, voice chipper, “You coming?”

Confused, I ask, “Ken?”

I am answered with curious silence. Finally, Ken responds, “Geoffrey?”

Ken lives a few minutes away. He was closer than a cab. Also, I thought he would want to come. “Yeah, Ken. Can you come over? I need your help.”

More silence, “What’s wrong?”

“I just got a call from Sharon Wolfe.” Stop for the deep breath, let it out slow, “Kyle killed Raychel.”

“What? When?”

“Tonight. Not long ago. The police are talking to Kyle now. Sharon says he’s confessing. I need to get to their apartment, but I need someone to get me there. Can you come and get me?”

“Sure, “ he stopped. “You okay, Geoffrey?”

“No. You?”

“I don’t know. Shocked, you know? I’ll be there in a few.”

“Okay.” Something still stuck in my mind, though. “Ken, who did you think I was before?”

“Not important. I was just expecting to see a friend in a bit. See you soon.” and the phone went dead.

If you’ve read my earlier writings (or a few works from others), I am sure you are wondering why the first person I called was someone I consider a personal traitor. Had I been more devious at the moment, I could have considered it an opportunity to close the growing gap between us. Show him that our differences could be settled by calling on him to help out in a crisis. But that was not the case. I just needed the ride and he was nearby.

Sitting down and waiting for Ken, and I’m back in my office yesterday. “You need to get number 4 back in order, Ken.”

Ken is leaning smugly against my credenza. He never uses the chair. “I’ve got a new mixer on order, but it’s a custom job. It’s going to be at least a month or so. When I designed the studios, I designed them for optimal sound. I never designed them to be repaired. The good news is we don’t really need it until November. I’ll have it back up and running by then.”

Typical Ken. Blizzard of bullshit. Only drawback for him is that he doesn’t listen to himself. I did, though.

“Mixer, Ken? Last week you said it was a rattle in the acoustic panels.”

He didn’t break, or shuffle his feet. Just looked me straight in the eye, “Did I?”

“Yes. You said the panels were imported and they were on order. But the timeframe was the same. A month or so.”

Same dead-eyed delivery, “Did I?”

“Why don’t I just go and take a look myself? You want to come along, Ken?”

He smiled. The bastard just smiled, “If you want to look at an empty studio, far be it from me to stop you.”

I stomped out of my office, leaving Ken leaning, and went down to the studio level. The elevator acted like an anger incubator. I started wondering what Ken would try to hide from me in number 4. The list was very short. By the time I reached the studio level, I knew what I was in for.

Sergei shuffled up the hallway to pick me off. I noticed he came from the direction of number 4. Had he been watching out for them the whole time? The picture was coming together very quickly. He tried to start a typical conversation, “Morning, Mr. MacIntyre, “ regardless of the fact that it was 6:30 in the evening.

I smiled to him, grabbed him by his shirt and flung him into a wall, “Who is in number 4, Sergei?” He stammered for an answer (an English one). I was not going to be stalled further, “Sergei, your job is riding on your answer.”

His eyes went wide. He blubbered a weak, “She . . . they’re gone now.”

“Raychel and Kyle?” I asked. His eyes went wider. I let go of him and stalked to number 4, practically kicking open the door.

The less said about the confrontation in number 4 the better. I cannot contradict Kyle’s account of the events. I admit that my actions in the studio were wrong, and even stupid at times. I was out of control. I would like to point out that, unlike Kyle, I do not live for anger or relish the opportunity to express myself in that manner.

It's 1:35 in the morning when Ken picks me up and we make a quiet drive to Kyle's apartment. Our drive together is utilitarian. Any attempt to come together for a meeting of the minds is aborted by our unstated preference to enjoy each other's silence.

It is hard to believe how the world was so different two hours ago. I try to remember what I was doing two hours ago, with minimal success. Drunk? Definitely. I don't really like to drink that much, but Sharon was persistent. I remember being at Safehaven with Sharon and Laura Douglass and the car ride home, but I cannot remember what time anything happened at. Late, I know. I fell asleep in the car. Next thing I know I'm being carried into my home like a sack of potatoes by Sharon. She flopped me on the bed. That's when I saw the clock for the last time that night. It was 12:23 a.m. Sharon looked down on me and said, "I'll be back in a minute." I dropped off to sleep and everything changed in an hour.

Ken and I made it to the apartment by 2:00 a.m. The police were everywhere. None of them were talking. I asked one if he had seen Sharon Wolfe and was directed to a homicide detective. He informed me that if Ken or I wanted to make a statement too that it would be best if we came to the police station to do it.

We did. It went well into the morning. Do you want to know about my statement to the police? Sorry, but that's none of your business. That day is over.