

Homicide: The Game

Presents

Painseeker

“Bond”

by David Vanderhoff

What was your New Year’s resolution? Do you still remember what it was?

I remember mine. I take New Year’s resolutions very seriously – as seriously as Lent. My father taught me that Lent was meant to permanently purify one thing about yourself. You should choose something about yourself that you want to change to make yourself a better person. If you chose to stop smoking for Lent, then you should learn by the end of the 40 days that you no longer need cigarettes and never smoke again. There should be no lapse to your previous, unwanted behavior. New Year’s resolutions are the same for me, but with one minor exception. For a New Year’s resolution, I prefer to choose more long-term goals. A New Year’s resolution should be impossible to accomplish in only 40 days. Otherwise, it would be a waste of a year’s opportunity to better myself.

This year I resolved to re-build my family. I am not referring to my wife and children. I mean the family consisting of my parents and Raychel.

This past year has been a trying one for me personally. Lance Wagner’s “living memorial” to my sister has managed to open wounds which I believed were healed; however, I have discovered that they were only dormant. When Laura Douglass called me to inform me of this site, I was more than pleased to follow her advice to remain away from the action. Despite my distance, I remained an interested reader of Painseeker. What I learned from the site unsettled me. While both Raychel and I eventually escaped the abuse that haunted our home, it seems that neither of us successfully confronted it. We ran from our roots, and by doing each of us lost the only person who could have helped us understand and come to terms with what happened.

It was only near the end of her life that Raychel and I began to re-establish contact with one another after almost 10 years of silence between us. Our reunion was brief. We spoke a few times, met once, and then she was gone. Murdered. With her passing, I believed that my first family had reached its end. My mother passed away in 1991 and my father died prior to Raychel's renewed contact with me in June of 2000. It was not until Lance Wagner began building Painseeker that I learned that I was not the last representative of my family.

At first I did not believe Lance's claim to be Raychel's husband. I had a number of reasons for this belief. First and foremost was the fact that Raychel did not at any time mention to me that she was married. Not to Lance Wagner. Not to anyone. That alone was extremely difficult to overcome.

Second, I had received extensive contact from Laura Douglass prior to receiving Lance's call. Laura had portrayed herself convincingly as Raychel's only real friend in Los Angeles. She went on to provide less than encouraging portraits of other people in Raychel's life, and went on extensively about Lance's "delusional" nature. She preemptively struck against Lance's claim. Laura's continued contact with me poisoned me against Raychel's other acquaintances. As I learned more about Laura's personal failings, I began to have my own doubts. In light of her recent arrest for Raychel's murder, there can be no remaining doubt that Laura Douglass was a liar. She may even have known about the marriage and deliberately lied about it.

My third reason to resist Lance's claim of marriage was his avoidance of the issue when confronted. Numerous times he was challenged by acquaintances and readers alike, and his responses were minimal at best. He would mildly assert his marital status when confronted directly and he refused to respond to angry challenges. I assumed that this meant his claim was groundless; however, when I spoke with him, he stated that he only wanted to know who his friends and enemies were. His responses were passive, but they were not without purpose.

My final – and most embarrassing – reason was that I suspected Lance of Raychel’s murder. When given Laura’s false profile of Lance, his incident with Raychel where Sharon Wolfe intervened “on Raychel’s behalf,” and his lack of a sufficient alibi, he seemed to make a likely suspect. For that, I am truly sorry.

When I read Nick Graves’ report “First Suspect,” I was conflicted. I was so sure that Lance had been lying about his marriage that I had a friend in Los Angeles pick up a copy of the license so that I could have a copy of it in my own hands. Even then, I could not believe that Lance was innocent of Raychel’s murder. Then in early January, when Laura Douglass and Sharon Wolfe were arrested, I knew that I had been wrong all along.

For not believing in his marriage, for mis-reading him entirely, for even suspecting him of murder, I offer this public and printed apology to my brother-in-law, Lance Wagner.

Two weeks ago I picked up the phone and called Lance to apologize to him personally. I found him to be quite different from the person I had previously believed him to be. We spoke for a few hours that night, trading stories about Raychel and comparing the Raychel he knew with the Raychel I knew. It was like having a piece of Raychel back. I know that he was not the only person in her life. One could even argue that Lance was not the most significant person in her life at the time. There is one thing that does not change: Lance is a member of my family. We share a bond.

As a member of my family, I will assist Lance in his endeavors. He has informed me of his book deal to write a book about Raychel’s life. I mentioned to him that if he was to write a book about Raychel, he must include selections of her poetry. When he re-stated Ken Kincaid’s claim that Raychel’s entire library is owned by Cain International, I told him that I would look into the matter on his behalf. Knowing Ken Kincaid as I do, I believe that his claim is most likely fraudulent. If this claim proved false, then – as Raychel’s legal husband – the complete library of Raychel’s work will revert to Lance, and all publishing rights for Raychel’s work lie with him.

The previous year has been a difficult one, yet has proved to also be a rewarding one. I expect this next year will be even more rewarding. I have resolved myself to it.

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