WHAT HAPPENED TO NORA

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A man learns about the death of his love in a road accident..and he has a dream of her...which makes him investigate her death...uncovering a strange story

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Roaming about in my mind, was an image of a woman I knew, so beautiful and yet no more, buried deep in the ground. Like my freedom, I adored her too. We would often meet and spend long times reflecing on life or simply making love. Time seemed to fly by when she was around and when she got up to leave, it was as if I had parted with a part of myself. Those moments we spent together registered in the deepest corner of my mind. And I felt bewitched by a woman, simply and yet so beautiful of heart and mind. But lady destiny was soon to swoop and snatch her from me and all that had known her.

It had been a regular cold day in the month of November when I received a call from a mutual friend that my lady friend was no more in this world. And a horrible feeling descended upon myself and my heart was for a moment rendered motionless and I gasped for air. Nora, my dear love gone ! I could barely make reason when he said that she had died in a road accident. My

world came undone and I collapsed into a near by chair unable to believe what had happened. Why? Why was life so cruel? I wept and wept like a baby burying my tearfilled face in my hands. And I felt that a part of me had died.

The funeral was held the following day attended by her family and friends. I was unable to look at the body of hers lying in a coffin. She looked calm and peaceful in death but was she I wondered. And lying there Oh so sweet and innocent, I could not help but wail and cry. It was the cry of a person deeply hurt by the demise of a dear friend.

As she was lowered deep into the ground and people paid their respects to the departed soul, I could do nothing but wish that she was alright in the next world where souls only live.

That night she came to me in my dream and she stared at me with her innocent eyes before muttering â murderâ . She repeated that to me four times and then I saw blood stains upon her dress.

She pointed to a young sour looking man with big beady brown eyes, a round nose, puckered lips and a handlebar moustache. With curly brown hair and a rather long face which was masked in a frown, he appeared quite vicious. But I had not seen this gentleman before. And then I woke up with a start. I was sweating profusely though it was such a cold night. Looking at my watch, it was just three. And so I laid my eyes but my heart was bent upon investigating how the accident took place.

So early in the morning, I woke up and hurried down to my dear departed lady friends parents house. I was welcomed at the door by the butler and showed into the drawing room. The wall was adorned by potraits of Nora. Four minutes later, her mother appeared dressed in black obviously still mourning the death of her daughter. For a while silence pervaded before I asked her for information on the death of her daughter.

She looked upto me and began in a rather low tone that she had been coming home late at night from a party driven by the chauffeur Morris. It was a rather foggy night and Morris had struck the car head on into an oncoming vehicle. Miraculously Morris had survived with a broken leg but Nora had struck her temple rather violently into the dashboard. An internal haemorraging of the brain had killed her immediately. â Where is Morris?â I asked.

â Oh ! He is at the only hospital in town and has been admitted to the ICU.â

Thanking her for my time, I later made my way to Saint Peters Hospital where I slowly made my way upto the reception and asked where the ICU was. On getting the directions, I headed for the ICU to meet Mr. Morris.

When I entered, I was taken aback. The man who lay on the hospital bed with a cast about his leg was exactly the same as the one I had seen in the dream the previous night. Was it just a coincidence or was there some truth in the dream that I had. I recovered quickly as he looked upto me and asked who I was. And I told him that I had been a close friend and I had just wanted to know what had happened. He looked to be in deep pain and he told me the same tale that I had heard off from the parents of my departed friend. And there wasnt much he could add to the details that I had already heard off.

Now I was interested in seeing the wrecked vehicle and the tree in which they had crashed. I made my way to the police station where I learnt they had the wrecked car in their possession. I told of whom I was and that I wanted to have a look at the vehicle. The police seargent was reluctant to comply with my request initially but eventually gave in and took me to the back of the police

station where the wrecked car lay. The front portion of the car seemed to have caved inwards and the windscreen had been shattered by the force of the impact with the tree.

According to the police seargent, there were many theories as to what had happened. The first suggested that it had been a little bit foggy and the driver who had been speeding had lost control and slammed the car into a roadside tree. Another theory suggested by some was that the axle of the vehicle had broken and the driver had lost control of the car that rammed into the tree.

However the broken watch recovered from the body of the victim was stuck at 8:30 pm and according to people who lived in that hilly area had told the police that the mist and fog had appeared around 9 pm and therefore it was doubtful that the cause for the accident could have been mist.

The speedometer of the damaged car was fixed at 90 kilometers per hour. According to a peasant who had been walking along the road that night, he had seen the illfated car swerving from left to right and vice versa as if a madmen were driving it before ramming into the roadside tree at great speed. There had been little or no mist whatsoever at that time.

By the evidence that has so far been found, it seems that the driver was beyond doubt responsible. But why did he do what he had done?

What was the reason?

The Police Seargent then introduced me to a detective named Alan Smith who was a tall wiry individual with sharp deep set eyes on a long angular face. He looked me up and down before asking me whether Nora had been in any problems or difficulties lately.

And I had replied in the negative.

â What is it that you suspect sir ?â I asked him.

â Murder. Cold blooded murderâ he had replied.

And I had looked at him unable to believe what he said.

â Its a hunch that I haveâ , he said. â However we have to find out what happened exactly.â

â If the driver is a suspect, why not apprehend him?â I said.

â My men are already posted there in plain clothesâ he answered. â Hes going nowhereâ he added.

â We might be going over to the house to inspect his room to see if we can find some clues which might shed light on whats happenedâ he said to me.

â May I tag alongâ , I asked him and he nodded.

We were soon driving towards Noras house. And I was deeply pensive about what had happened.

And when we rang the front door bell, it was answered by Noras father. Mr. David Shaw stood there in the door way. He recognised me and it was I who introduced him to the detective. And Mr. Shaw seemed a little surprised that a detective had made his way to his residence. Quietly the detective briefed him on the findings and his suspicions.

He had asked Mr. Shaw if he had noticed any strange within Noras behavior especially in the past week or so. And Mr. Shaw had responded that she did look a little upset though he had not figured that it might be that serious.

At that moment, Noras mother walked in and she announced that she had overheard our conversation. However she could not lend any additional information regarding her daughter.

Detective Alan Smith looked towards Mr. David Shaw and asked him how long had the driver Morris been working for them. And Mr. Shaw replied that he had been recently hired. It had been about five months or so.

â Could you please take me upto his quartersâ , the detective asked Mr. David Shaw who slowly shook his head.

Soon the detective and I were following the lead of

Mr. David Shaw. The servants quarters were located at a short distance away from the main house. As we entered the quarters of the driver, the detective started looking around. There was a small cabinet that lay next to the bed. And within it there were various magazines. He was sifting through them when a small piece of paper dropped onto the floor.

The detective examined it carefully ensuring that he did not leave any finger prints. Of course he was wearing gloves.

Scribbled on the piece of paper were the words:

'Not today'.

He then opened the closet in which hung a few pants and shirts. And he looked back at us and said

â How does a driver afford designer branded clothes ? Look this is an armani suit. And here this is a shirt made by Calvin Kleinâ he muttered.

As he rummaged through the pockets of his pants and coats he came up with a small picure of Nora and him sitting together. It was a very intimate picture of her with her shoulder placed on his shoulder.

It looked to be about seven or eight years old. The Detective handed over the picture to Mr. David Shaw who looked at it. And Detective Alan asked him if he recognised the young man.

And Mr. Shaw said that he had no idea of who he was.

As the detective was going through a small suitcase placed in the closet, he found a crumpled up letter which read:

Dear John,

It is good that dad has not recognised you. Being in deep love with the son of his arch enemy and rival in business, Mr. Ernie Wells would have broken him and God knows what he may have done. We were very close together for three or four years till you left for your higher education abroad. And over the time you were away, I met a lovely young gentleman whom I have fallen in love.

When you appeared at the doorstep in response to the ad we had placed for a driver, I had not initially recognised you but somehow seeing you again rekindled within me the feelings I held for you and I am confused what to do.

Please leave us before dad suspects who you are. I cannot run off with you. That would break my fathers heart. You have to understand that times have changed and I am in love with someone else.

I hope you understand.

Yours,

Nora

As he read out this letter, it had a strange effect upon

Mr. Shaw who slumped into the chair present near the desk with his hands on his face sobbing and crying.

He broke out saying : â About two weeks ago, I had been walking out in the nearby woods, when from behind bushes I saw Nora sitting with the driver on a log. Of course they had their backs to me and I spied upon them from behind the dense bushes. I overheard them talking about the time when they had been in love. And then I heard who he really was and it was then that I was blinded with anger, disgust and rage.

When I heard that John was driving down to the town to call his parents that night, I had hired someone to ensure that the brakes failed. Little did, I know that my daughter would be with him.

Oh why did, Nora have to die ! And ever since the accident and death of my daughter, the guilt of what I have done has weighed heavily upon my heart and mind.â

I could not believe what I had heard. However Detective Alan had quickly radioed

to the police station asking for the police to come over to the Shaw mansion.

David Shaw was convicted and sentenced to thirty years for the murder of Nora and attempted murder of John.

I still wonder why Nora had never disclosed to me any information regarding John and his trying to get back into her life.

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