

### **Juryns motivering:**

*Väl återgiven och trovärdig dialog karaktäriserar denna obehagligt nervkittlande novell. Med filmisk skärpa dras vi in i jakten på en seriemördare, där även upplösning och förklaring får plats inom det korta formatet.*

#### **The mind of a serial killer**

“We got another one, sir,” he says with only two weeks of experience as a Los Angeles detective, not knowing the coming time will be nothing like what he has experienced so far as a cop.

“So?” his partner who has been a detective for ten years, detective sergeant for twenty-one, and a cop for even longer answers him with that old repugnant sense in his voice.

“The murder last week, these must be connected. See that face carv... sorry... carved in his forehead with what appears to have been a sharp metal object? The last victim had that as well. Do you think we’re dealing with a serial kil...”

“I might be old but I’m far from stupid nor is there anything wrong with my memory,” Detective Sergeant Voight interrupts Detective Smith “I want the advanced forensics, as you younglings like to call it, ASAP!”

“And the cause of death?” he carries on with a much calmer tone after losing his temper a bit.

“Same as the last one, a quarter-inch knife cut to his throat's left blood vessels and a basic kitchen knife stab to the back. The forensics technicians couldn’t find any prints on the kitchen knife and the knife that cut his throat’s vein must’ve been the same, not left on the scene this time either, sir.”

“Any personal items missing? Phone, wallet, keys?” Voight asks Smith.

“No, phone and wallet are still in his pocket. Actually, his wedding ring has been taken off. You can still see the marks on his left ring finger. Wasn't the last victim married too but had no ring although the forensics showed

significant marks of a ring being worn over years?”

This time Voight only answered with a discrete nod.

“So if the murder killed him for money he would’ve taken his phone and wallet too,” Smith says without making the connection that this murder has been committed for the sake of murder, not money or a robbery gone wrong.

Voight already knew from his years of experience that in that dark rainy alley late at night in the center of Los Angeles they were dealing with a serial killer and the missing wedding rings couldn’t stop bothering him. It was with a heavy heart that he realized the last time he had the words *the mind of a serial killer* in his mouth was thirty years ago back in 1995. The case never got solved and Voight never managed to get it out of his head. It is one of those cold cases that stays with you no matter what and you know that a killer may be walking as a free man, a serial killer.

It was when Voight and Smith were on their way to get coffee before heading into the station a call came over the radio.

*“All units be advised, we’ve got 1-8-7 downtown. Any units available report to the scene immediately. On-scene unit reports the same type of gruesome carved...”*

Smith’s hearing gets damped again after hearing that there is a possibility of the same serial killer striking again and he gets tunnel vision, not because of his driving but more of a mode where everything else fades.

“Did you hear what he said?” Voight asks a bit frustrated about Smith zoning off, “It was the chief of police, he wants all spare units advised to the scene!”

“How could you tell it was the chief of police and not dispatch, sir?”

“Kid, you haven’t been on the job long enough to know that when the chief of police himself outranks and overrides the dispatcher shit is about to go down, as you younglings like to say.”

Smith didn’t even have time to react to Voight referring to him as a youngling

yet again after the call coming in over the radio.

“Hit it,” he tells Smith and nods insinuating to step on it after having their small talk wasting precious time.

“6W23 show us responding to the 1-8-7 eastbound from Beverly and Kenmore,” Voight answers over the radio experienced as he is.

Shortly after responding to the call, Smith asks why it’s an emergency if the person is already dead. So Voight explains that the emergency isn’t whether it’s possible to save the victim's life but the emergency in fact is that the society is now suspecting a serial killer on the loose thanks to the reporters being so noseey.

When they arrive at the scene and get a first look at the body they quickly recognize the message carved in the victim's forehead. But this time it was a little bit different.

“The kitchen knife is upside down, sir,” Smith says eagerly.

“I may be a short sixty-four-year-old man with wrinkled skin but do I really have to remind you that there’s nothing wrong with my eyes? I can tell that the knife is upside down.”

“This is the Thai restaurant where there was an unsolved murder back in 1995, right?” Smith asks Voight after only having read about the case the reason being he was only three years old at the time of the murder.

“Listen, there’s something you need to know,” he answers, draining the curiosity Smith had, “I was on this case back in 1995. The murder was clearly an act of a serial killer but the person behind it got away somehow. The creep always laid his or her victims on their back with their arms along their side and drew a happy face on the floor beside the body. A smiling face drawn with the blood of a person he just murdered. That’s one of many reasons I haven’t been able to get this case out of my head.”

Lost for words Smith doesn't answer him, nor did he have time before Voight changes the topic of discussion.

"He's married," Voight says out loud as a statement, not a question.

"Yes, that's why he has a wedding ring on hi..."

Smith gets interrupted by the look Voight gives him but also the realization that the victim still had a wedding ring.

Voight having overslept gets woken up by his phone ringing, it was Detective Smith who had the courage to call him even though he had all the right to when Voight had overslept, which had never happened before during his time as a cop and according to older cops Voight rarely overslept, this work was his job, all he had. Smith wouldn't confess to it but he called not only to tell him the case has had a breakthrough but also a bit because he was worried about him despite the dreadful attitude he could have.

At the station, a lot of other detectives from the robbery-homicide division were waiting for the notorious detective to arrive to inform him about the case.

"We got her," Detective Smith tells Voight proudly as if he is the one to have made a breakthrough in the case.

"What do you mean *we got her*?" he asks confused.

"She just walked in earlier this morning wanting to confess and some blue suits locked her up in the interrogation room waiting for you. She asked to speak to you directly, that's why I called, to hurry you up," he answers realizing he should've skipped the last bit.

In the interrogation room sits a beautiful young woman no one would suspect to be behind a series of gruesome murders.

"Detective Sergeant Voight..." she says with a soft voice that would creep anyone out in a situation like this, except Voight.

“I’m finished,” she continues.

“Finished with what? Taking a shit?” he answers starting to lose his temper again.

“It was me. I take full responsibility for slitting the victims' throats and stabbing them in the back. It was me who carved faces in their foreheads,” she says filling the room with a tension you could smell.

“Have you figured out the wedding rings yet, Detective Sergeant Voight?” She continues with a tone that makes his rank and position in the LAPD seem silly.

She pulls out the wedding rings hanging on a string around her neck as a necklace.

With Voight sickened at her walking around with them as a trophy she goes on about the murders.

“Voight,” she starts with a more serious tone “do you know who I am? I am the daughter of the serial killer you were chasing back in 1995. One of my father's victims was his own wife, my mother.

“Bull-fucking-shit!” he shouts at her. “We didn’t find you back then and nothing that suggested you were his daughter!”

“I do not have the same name as my father and technology was not advanced enough back then,” she says making Voight think she sounds like a lawyer with her proper language.

They’re interrupted by a knock on the door. The forensics had come back with fingerprints on the kitchen knife matching the ones of the pretty girl confessing.

“Scarlett Nelson, Scarlett Nelson,” Voight says entering the interrogation room again after now knowing her name from the fingerprint results “you’re going down for these murders. Wanna know what you're looking at? Life

without parole.”

“Obviously, that is why I am here today confessing. But congratulations on finding out my name, Detective Sergeant. Some real detective work right there.”

It was when Voight was escorting her she said one last thing.

“I made it easy for you. I had it all planned, that is why it was upside down. I used all my force to throw it out of anger and therefore did not wear a glove for a better grip. Knowing I was gonna confess it would not make much of a difference. My last victim was my father, I killed my own father in the same restaurant my father killed my mother, that is why I am here confessing. I took the rings as a trophy since my father killed the woman he married,” she says fiddling with the rings. “I am finished. I am now finally able to get some peace. The peace you should have brought to the public with him in jail.”

This was his last arrest, his last case closed. Detective Sergeant Voight was retiring praised without making a big deal out of it and just like that he’s retired, with peace in mind and one less criminal mind on the streets, and not any mind, the mind of a serial killer.

*Jesper Olofsson-Prša* (Hederspris Novellprisfesten 2020)