

A Hanging at Cragmont Park

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“I didn’t even know people were still doing this. Why choose rope when you could have a gun or at least a knife?”

The dead man was Tom Vega. He was in his late thirties and was hanging not from his head but instead from his feet. He was Caucasian and was six five. There were large contusions around his ankles which was consistent with the hanging but there was still no conclusive evidence as to why he was dead.

Cragmont Park was cold tonight and the waxing moon was casting a eerie light on the tree branches and making the small gazebo beside the tree seem all the more dark. The trees were illuminated and were almost white and resembled splintered bones. A gust of wind came up blowing hard and pushing the hanged man to and fro which caused the branches and their shadows to jerk. The ground was damp and muddy in many places from the on-again-off-again rain that had been occurring in Berkeley lately. The Berkeley crime unit lit up the backs of the two people huddled together trying to keep warm.

One of them was a male who slightly resembled a late Groucho Marx. His name was Loomis, he drank occasionally and was particularly fond of a strong Cognac. In his early years he was the kid who spent countless hours reading and due to this had acquired a hefty vocabulary and also an adversity to most people. He was not very fond of people or talking.

His partner, in contrast, was particularly fond of talking, much to Loomis’ dismay. Her name was Lola. She was a small Latino woman who barely broke five feet. She was

very loud and had a tendency of not thinking before she talked but had remarkable eyesight due to her vegetable rich vegan diet.

“I wonder who did it?” remarked Lola. “I bet it was a murder.”

Well that would be the assumption since someone was *murdered*. She’s so stupid, thought Loomis, it’s been a year on the force and she still asks that question every time. I wish I could work alone or with someone else. Anyone would be better than Lola. Loomis stalked off to look once again at the hanged man leaving Lola to continue having the same conversation by herself.

While Lola continues that, I think I will go and inspect the body now that the police have finally left. Loomis slowly went up to the man and shook loose his pockets trying to find out if the cops had completed their jobs. Nothing fell out, they had. He then reverted to searching the ground and made a full circle around the tree. Still nothing. But there was still the gazebo, he tactfully walked up towards the decrepit building. He traced the entire area but was once again fruitless.

The weather was making him irritable and he wanted to leave. Instead he decided to drink in the ambiance of the view. Sighing, he leaned on the railing and looked at the expansive view speckled with clouds and stars. Loomis then suddenly looked down at the cascade of earth that was the bottom side of the hill and saw a dull glint of light. Finally he thought to himself. Now all I have to do is find Lola.

He turned back to Lola but couldn’t find her. rather than going to find her he decided to advance towards the car and wait for her there. As he walked down the curved ramp to the street he saw a blob or more likely a child slumped over a rock. The body seemed lifeless but it was hard for him to tell due to the crawling fog that had now

climbed to his hip. He ran up to the child only to discover that it was his partner. He tapped her shoulder but she didn't respond .

“Lola, this isn't the time for sleeping or what ever it is you are doing.”

“Oh” she responded, jumping back from the rock. “I think I may have found something, what do you make of it?” In her hand she held a broken syringe similar to the kind doctors use. Only this one had a drop of now-coagulated blood on it and also had drops of mud on it no doubt from the ground. Despite the peculiarity of this it also had the needle half missing leaving a jagged line to run along the bottom. In the syringe were a few cloudy drops of the poison.

“Where did you find this?” demanded Loomis.

“um I saw it behind the rock, I was trying to find the other half.”

“Good work Ms. Rodriguez, keep it up. I'm going to go do some fallow up on something I'll be right back.”

“Okay dokey”

Who would have thought she would be the first to find a clue on this case, thought Loomis to himself, as he climbed back up to the gazebo. He then turned to his left stalking off to one of the many dirt trails that snaked through out the park. He descended down the path with much difficulty due to the mud and the lack of light, but mostly because of his poor footing. He continued to fumble down the trail shakily until he at last began to slip down the magnificent hill. He tumbled slowly and tried to grab anything to stop his fall but only resulted in him dirtying himself more so. Lola is never going to let me forget that this happened. Maybe I could bribe her but with what? Contemplated Loomis as he reached the last stretch of his lengthy fall.

Loomis now lay on the ground. His head was still swirling and he felt a mess. After farther inspection he concluded that he had a severe bruised left shoulder along with a bleeding pair of hands. He looked up and saw that he had strayed from the path and had found an abandon stone hut. The hut was very small and quite quant and could even be considered beautiful, if it had not been for the fact that it was very late at night. Loomis quietly walked up to the small decomposing hut noting the refined engravings on the lip of the doorway. He lightly stepped in. The room had an old rounded table with heaps of debris. Directly underneath the table sat a Black stiletto with a stunning green sole. It was a size 9 ½. Picking up the shoe Loomis glanced around the room took one picture and then placed the shoe in an evidence bag. He then placed the bag into his pack and closed the lid. He then exited the room.

Once he found the path he quickened his pace wanting to leave the heavily treed forest and return back to a more hospitable and open area. Loomis looked up and saw the same gazebo. He was finally in the right place now all he had to do was find the shiny thing. He patted down his slender frame searching for something and then shoved his left hand into his right breast pocket pulling out a white lighter. He lit the lighter close to the ground hoping to find the glint that he had seen before. He awkwardly scampered about constantly relighting the lighter but still had found nothing.

Deciding to give up he lit a cigarette and breathed in the warm air, calming himself instantaneously. He smoked the cigarette quickly not savoring it as much as he usually did and then threw it on the ground. His eyes followed the still red embers to the ground and walked over to the cigarette to put it out. He looked down and along with his now soiled cigarette was a ring.

The ring was magnificent. It must have been 40 carats. It was a seductive green and it continued to glint in the miniscule light cast by the moon. Loomis picked up the ring and taking out a evidence bag (in which also resided the shoe and)placed the bedazzling thing into it. He then placed it in his breast pocket along with the lighter, not wanting it to fall during his climb. Loomis then reached down and brought up a falling branch that would now be his walking stick, hopefully he wouldn't have as much trouble this time around.

After Loomis had finished his climb he walked up to the hanged man and checked his hand for a marriage band. Just as he had expected it was missing but his paled skin on his ring finger suggested that the man was married. He called over to Lola but unsurprisingly she could not hear him. He trudged over to her again and began to speak as he came closer to her.

"I think we can go home now I've finally solved the case."

"But how? Who was it?"

"I'll tell you all of that tomorrow all I want right now is to go home and have a big glass of Cognac and shower."

"Ok sure but can I drive?"

"Sure."

As Lola darted to the car Loomis took one last look at the park. The park seemed different now, much less foreboding. The wind began to blow again and small sprints of rain spat from the sky as Loomis got into the car.

The next day Lola and Loomis rounded up the police squad and explained to them that they would have to arrest Mrs. Vega.

“You see Julia Vega had found out that her husband Tom Vega had been cheating on her. And she decided to hang the man she had once loved in the park where they had first met. She hung him up side down and then injected him with what the lab has found to be Belladonna, a toxic herb. She watched him die and then took off his wedding ring placing it in her pocket as a keep sake and then continued to throw her own engagement ring down the hill. After this she walked down the hill and hid in the hut at the base of the hill, losing one of her heels as she hid and scurried away. She probably thought no one would see it down there but that’s where she was wrong.

“Well I’m never bringing my children there,” stated Lola.