

A 27 year old cold case murder mystery.

Unfinished Business

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Tom Fowler – *Unfinished Business*

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Tom Fowler
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2. July, 1968

The next several weeks flew by quickly. It only took Moya a couple of weeks to find the house she wanted, a nice two story with plenty of room located in North Oklahoma City, and the contract was signed July fourth weekend. The McKays visited the Sooner Baptist Church several times (located close to their new home, of course) and would formally join the following Sunday. Charles liked his new job and the girls were having a ball; swimming everyday in the now dry Oklahoma heat and making new friends.

"I guess it's going to be over 100 again today," Charles stated flatly, over his usual breakfast of toast and coffee. "I guess we moved home in time to get in on the summer heat wave."

Moya smiled. "Yes, we did. The girls don't seem to mind."

Charles' turn to smile, "No, they don't. I guess they're living in the pool this summer? They've gotten brown as bears."

Moya always sat across from her husband during breakfast. It was just the two of them during the summer, as the girls slept until mid-morning. Charles, a balding man and quickly developing a middle-age paunch, marveled at how beautiful his wife was.

Moya McKay was 41 years old, two years older than Charles, and had been a beauty queen in her youth. She was fair-skinned, with long, dark hair as black as coal. Moya was small, but not too small, and carried the same 110 pounds she weighed when she met Charles.

He looked deep into her brown eyes, smiling tenderly. "You're more beautiful now than when we met." He told her that every

morning, and she never tired of hearing it. It wasn't a purely flattering remark. Moya McKay, a beautiful girl in her youth, had matured into very beautiful and elegant woman. The years of world travel developed in her a sophistication and worldliness she wore very well. Charles was lucky to have her and he knew it.

As if reading his mind, she answered, "And I'm lucky to have you. I'm the happiest woman in the world."

It wasn't really true, at least, in his mind it wasn't, but it was always gratifying to hear her say it. Moya lucky to have him? He didn't think so.

7. Saturday, August 24, 1968

The murderer did the job well. Enough tranquilizer was in the bourbon bottle to insure all who drank from it would fall into a deep sleep upon turning in for the night. The murderer wanted no mistakes; it was not known what kind of reaction, if any, Charles would have to the curare-laced scotch. At least, if anything went wrong, the other adults in the house would be fast asleep. Not being experienced in the use of poisons, the murderer took a big chance with this method of killing. The murderer was lucky Charles died in his sleep in the middle of the night, after making love to his wife. The amount of poison in the scotch bottle had to be just right, and it was.

Moya woke at 8:33 A.M. Saturday morning, a time she would remember for the rest of her life. She thought, as she fought to shake the sleep from her eyes, everyone overslept. She was right; everyone did. The teenagers, even Jerry on the couch, were still sound asleep (without benefit of chemical assistance). She heard no noises in the house as she reached over to wake Charles.

Charles was stiff and cold to the touch. He had not bothered to put his pajamas back on last night after their lovemaking session and her hand felt the cool, hard skin on his back. Mercifully, he was lying facing away from her and she did not wake up to see the contortion on his discolored face.

The moment her hand touched his lifeless body, she knew he was gone. She always had a sixth sense about things concerning him and it

surprised her to think he could die in bed without her being aware of it immediately.

She threw her legs over the side of the bed. Her mind was wide awake, bordering on panic, but her body fought to wake up. Damn! she thought, I must have really been tired!

Moya fought back panic. She rose to walk the few feet to the dresser table chair to get her robe, but her legs were rubbery and almost fell. She had to get her robe. Moya was nude and she had to get Wes and Irene from upstairs.

She got her robe and stumbled while putting it on. Moya cried; panic and hysteria overtook her. With a mighty effort, Moya got her robe on and managed to leave the bedroom and climb upstairs to where Wes and Irene were still in bed, asleep. Without bothering to knock, she entered their bedroom and shook Wes.

"Wes!" You have to wake up! Charles is dead!"

Wes had the same reaction Moya did a few minutes before. His mind was wide awake and alert, but his body wouldn't wake up. (He, Irene, and Moya would compare their observations on this morning many times in the next few days, and always they would remember the odd sensation they felt upon awakening. Of course, they would find out soon enough they had been drugged, but they had no way of knowing this on that morning of horror). He saw the look of terror in his sister-in-law's face and eyes and asked, simply, "He's dead?"

"Yes! Come look! Hurry!" By now Irene was awake; she too with the heavy feeling of deep slumber and emotional shock. Almost a surreal experience, she would observe, later.

The three struggled downstairs, Wes almost losing his footing and falling. Although the adults were now awake and talking, making clumsy, noisy movements, the children continued to sleep. It was just as well; life would forever change for all of them upon awakening. Wes was the first to Charles' bedside. Moya saw his face for the first

time and had to stifle a scream. Irene held her tight, she herself feeling sick to her stomach.

Weakly, Irene asked, to no one in particular, "Did he have a heart attack?"

Wes, ashen faced and trembling, answered, "It looks that way. Maybe a stroke. I guess we better call the police."

Moya observed, in a weak voice, "I guess we won't be moving today."

Recovering a little, Irene said, "I suppose we better call the movers and cancel the van."

"They're probably already on the way. They're supposed to be here at 9," Moya said.

The others knew this, but had not thought of it. The clock on Moya's night table read 8:41. Only eight minutes since waking up. Seems like an eternity, Moya dazedly thought.

"Let's call the police, and then we'll call them," Wes said. Surprisingly, Irene grabbed the phone and made the calls, leaving Wes and Moya to stare at each other for a few long minutes. They couldn't bear to look at the grotesque appearance of Charles. A few hours before, he was full of life and looking forward to starting a new phase of that life

But, he would not be doing that now. In the first chaotic minutes after finding Charles, a policeman on a motorcycle arrived, delayed shortly by the moving van that pulled up and parked at the front of the McKay residence. Wes assumed the duty of informing the stunned moving men that the call had been canceled and why. Irene got the kids out of bed and broke the news to them as gently as possible. As she did this, the policeman, Officer Lester Green, called for an ambulance.

After examining the body, he asked Wes and Moya to join him in the den. He took a chair, and Wes and Moya sat on the sofa, vacated

scarcely five minutes ago by Jerry. "Had he been ill," he asked her Moya, gently.

"No."

"Was he in good health?"

"Yes. He had a physical just a couple of months ago, before leaving the Air Force. No health problems at all."

"Did he feel OK? Did he complain about anything?"

"No. This is a total shock." Her voice began to break, and Wes took her hand, squeezing it tightly.

Officer Green thought for a moment. Charles McKay did not look like a heart attack or stroke victim. Something about the deceased just doesn't look . . . right, he thought.

"May we have your permission to perform an autopsy?" he asked Moya.

She caught the look on the officer's face. "I wish somebody would do an autopsy," she said, flatly. "I know he wasn't sick." She shuddered as she thought the unthinkable. If he didn't die of illness, then . . .

"Thank you, Mrs. McKay," the officer answered, gently. Wes thought Officer Green was treating his sister-in-law with a great deal of consideration. "When the ambulance gets here, I'll relay the word. You'll have to sign a release."

"Thank you, Officer," Wes replied for her.

Sgt. Lester Green of the Oklahoma City Police Dept. had seen much in his 12 years on the force. A tall man at six feet, three inches, Green was 34 years old, blue-eyed, blonde and fair-skinned. His handsome face was rugged, but kind. A bit of an eccentric, he was one of only a handful of sergeants to request motorcycle duty. He liked the open air, even when the weather was bad. However, he was an astute observer and excellent policeman. He often relied on his instincts, and they rarely failed him.

Something about the McKay death bothered him.

But, now was not the time to pursue it. Until the autopsy was complete, he had only his suspicions to go on. Right now, the McKay's had shock and grief to deal with, plus five children to care for. Green suspected poisoning, which meant someone close to Mr. McKay was a murderer, but, under the circumstances, he didn't feel comfortable with voicing his suspicions. If he was wrong, he didn't want to be guilty of making matters worse for the McKays. He decided to proceed with caution.

"You were going to move today, Mrs. McKay?"

"Yes," she answered, biting back tears, "we dreamed of this day for twenty years. More than that, really, ever since we got married." Her voice trailed off, "On the very day our dream was to come true. . . ." Her voice was cold and flat. She fidgeted on the couch, her usual graceful demeanor now wooden and zombie like.

Green noticed. The woman needed sedation. Shock is settling in. The thought flashed through his mind, did she kill her husband? He didn't think so; at least, not yet. "When the medics arrive, I'll ask them to give you a sedative."

"Thank you."

"Mr. McKay, you told me you are Mrs. McKay's brother-in-law?"

"Yes, that's right."

"You and your family are here to help with the move today?"

"Yes," he answered, sadly.

Officer Green looked at both of them. "All of you have my sympathy." Lester Green meant it. It was a tragic and sad situation.

Wes took a deep breath, "Well, thanks, Officer. We appreciate that."

Green was hoping Irene McKay would come into the den and join them, but realized her hands were full with the children. He wasn't certain how many of them there were; they had been upstairs since he

arrived, all of 10 minutes ago. "How many children did you tell me are with you?"

"Charles' and Moya's three daughters, plus our son and daughter. May I go up and check on them?"

"Of course." As he said this, the medics arrived. Sgt. Green asked one of them to administer a shot to Moya. The medic told her to sit down, she may get drowsy. However, she insisted on staying with Sgt. Green as he led them to the bedroom and supervised the removal of the body. With Wes upstairs helping Irene with the children, who were further excited by the arrival of the paramedics, she did not want to be alone in the den, not even for a few minutes. Moya, like Charles, was well read on the Kennedy family. It occurred to her that what she felt must be similar to what Jackie Kennedy felt when her husband was murdered.

But, her husband wasn't murdered, was he? Why would I think that? I see it on the policeman's face, that's why! She couldn't bear to think of it, but how could a 39-year old man with a recent clean bill of health just die? As Sgt. Green escorted the medics out of the bedroom, with Charles under the sheet on the gurney, Moya burst into tears then collapsed on the cool tile in the front entryway.

She stayed in a deep sleep for several hours.

She woke a little before 2:00 P.M. Her neck hurt; the sofa in the den was not a good place to sleep in one position. When she opened her eyes, she saw Wes and Irene looking down on her, concern written on their faces.

"What time is it? She asked in a weak voice.

"2:00," Wes told her.

"I'm thirsty," she stated, groggily.

"I'll get water," Irene said, heading for the kitchen.

"Did I really sleep that long?"

"Yes, you did," Wes said in a deadpan voice.

"It wasn't just a bad dream. Charles is dead." Wes thought it odd she could say this in such a manner-of-fact manner. Then he remembered she was heavily sedated.

"Yes, he is." He paused, "They are going to perform an autopsy, but you passed out before you could sign the release papers."

"I don't suppose there's any hurry," she commented, dryly. "But, yes there is." Continuing with emotion, "We need to know what happened."

"Sgt. Green didn't say anything, but I got the impression he thinks there's more to it than what meets the eye."

"Meaning what?" Moya asked.

"I don't know," he answered, uncomfortably. "He said he'll be back later with the papers to sign. We'll talk about it then."

Irene returned with the water. Moya sipped it slowly at first then gulped the remainder of it until the glass was empty. Irene hoped her stomach wouldn't rebel. She had that problem earlier with little Moya.

Irene asked her, "Do you feel well enough to talk to the officer? We can call him and get this over with."

"I feel as good as I'm going to feel. How are the children?" Now that she was awake, worry and concern for them weighed heavily upon her. She felt guilty about letting them down when they needed her.

"They're OK. Moya didn't take it too well, but she's upstairs asleep." Irene forced a weak grin, "Like mother, like daughter."

"How are the others?"

"We took them to a movie. They're pretty shaken up, and they wanted to get out for some fresh air. We didn't know how long you would be out."

"Then right now would be the best time to talk to Sgt. Green for more reasons than one." The water seemed to revive her. She rose from the sofa and headed towards the bedroom. Half way down the short hall, she called to Irene, "I need your help. After I've been in

there once," pointing to the bedroom as Irene poked her head around the corner, "I'll be OK. But, I need you with me the first time."

Irene took her hand and together they entered the master bedroom. Irene had made the bed; the one Charles and Irene made love on a little over 12 hours ago. Moya looked down at the bed and realized she was going to be all right. Not happy, not ever the same again, but she would live the rest of her life, finish raising her children, and get on without Charles. This realization came with a painful cost: Her life was changed forever. She knew she would never be as happy again as she was the last 23 years. Charles was the best thing in her life, a true marriage made in heaven. Now, he was gone.

She let go of Irene's hand and headed for the closet to get the clothes she had intended to wear today. All of her other outfits were packed in moving boxes. Sgt. Green would have to be satisfied to see her in blue jeans and T-shirt. She thought briefly about re-scheduling the move then promptly put that out of her mind. There were more important things to do now. "Go ahead and call Sgt. Green if you haven't already. And, could you do me a favor while I'm dressing? Fix me some toast and coffee?"

Lester Green didn't spend much time with the McKay's that afternoon. He was more interested in getting the signed form into the hands of the medical examiner. He spoke with Wes, Irene, and Moya briefly before heading downtown with Moya's signed release.

Several hours later, the autopsy did indeed show Charles McKay died of heart failure, induced by poisoning. It was, as he suspected, murder. He made an appointment to talk with the McKay's early Sunday morning.

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