

The heart has its reasons.

by Fabien, Guillaume and Seth

I

On this 3rd of September, inspector Sebastian Castellanos, the Spanish detective, was resting in his office and eating, after the bodybuilding session he did every morning.

Suddenly, the telephone rang.

- Secretary of inspector Castellanos, good morning.

This voice was the inspector's secretary's, indeed. Laetitia Winston, 25 years old, had been working for him for six years. Thick dark hair, dark eyes, a perfect face with a small nose and a large mouth, and a blue collar around a white and soft neck. Castellanos used to be a gentleman to her. Her slim body, her long legs and arms, thin fingers, small feet, made the inspector describe her with only three simple words : « absolutely perfect girl ». Besides, she was very clever and was as perceptive as nurses.

On that day, Miss Winston was not as smiling as usual, because of the importance of the situation, the new case. The investigator noticed it, and immediately after she rang off, he asked her :

« What's the matter, Laetitia ? Is it serious ?

- Two persons have been murdered, their throats have been terribly cut. »

Sebastian Castellanos jumped off his armchair to his secretary, stunned :

« ¿Qué ? ¿Cuándo ? ¿Dónde ? Excuse me : when and where ?

- At Montgomery's mansion, she answered. It is located in the East of France, close to Germany. It happened yesterday.

- *¡Ya está bien ! ¡Increíble ! La garganta cortada...* No more details for the moment, please ! This is enough ! »

The inspector went to his bedroom, then to the bathroom. His beard and his moustache were shaking with excitement.

« I beg your pardon, sir. Well... do you want us to leave immediately ?

- Not immediately, remember ! I first have to have a shower after my training.

- So I'll prepare your luggage and mine, I suppose, for one week.

- Exactly ! So nice from you, thank you very much, *¡querida !* »

II

Three hours later, on the train to Strasbourg, Sebastian Castellanos, holding a pen and a note-book, and his secretary in front of her computer, were talking :

« Now that we are going to this Magory's castle or other, Castellanos said, can you please tell me everything the person who phoned you said to you ?

- Well, it is quite easy to understand. The man on the phone was named Arthur Schwan. He had, by the way, a very, very thick German accent.

- Well, I could've guessed it from his family name only.

- Could you ? But that doesn't matter. It happened, I told you, at Montgomery's mansion, and not at Magory's castle, as you said.

- *Perdón.*

- Never mind. The two people were found dead with their throats cut, in bushes near the fountain behind the mansion.

- *¡Asombroso !*

- I haven't learnt anything more.

- What about the murdered people ?
- Ah ! Yes, they are a young man and a young woman, who were really in love and engaged.
- *Triste, muy triste en verdad...* Nothing else ?
- No, except that the man on the phone seemed quite old...
- Perhaps it will be important for the investigation, you know. Because, you see, if this guy is too old, then it would not be possible for him to slaughter the victims.
- Yes, that is true. We'll see.
- Yes, we'll see. »

Castellanos's mobile phone suddenly rang.

« Who may it be ? » wondered the inspector.

A French voice was heard after he had said « Hola. » :

« *Âllo, monsieur Castellanos ?* the voice said.

- Well, hello, mister ?
- Montgomery, Brad. Do you speak French ?
- No, I don't. Do you speak Spanish ?
- Not at all, I'm afraid. Never mind. »

Then the voice became graver, less happy :

« Have you heard about the murder which has happened in my mansion ? I am the owner, as well as my brother Brett.

- Oh, are you ? And where is he, then ?
- He will arrive soon, I hope today for lunch.
- OK. So yes, I've heard about the bloody affair.
- What a horrible and tragic event, isn't it ?
- Indeed, but give me more details about the conditions, the circumstances. Who was there ?
- Oh, well, my brother and I had left just before the guests arrived and we left the house for some days to Arthur Schwan, who was then in charge of the keys, the servants, etc. So we both were on a trip when *monsieur* Schwan phoned us. I was about to go to Spain (« Good choice », Castellanos thought) and Brett to Poland, I think. But apart from that, there were seven persons, because I exculpate the servants, and the two victims.
- By the way, who were those two ? Castellanos asked.
- Their names were Lara Lennon and William Tunner, from England. They both had a brother or a sister, who also were at the mansion : Philip Lennon and Kate Tunner, and they are married.
- Lara and William ?
- No, Lara and William were only engaged, Kate and Philip are married. However there are some problems in their relationship : they are not very close to each other anymore, they sometimes get very angry at each other, etc.
- Do you believe that they are going to break up ?
- It is not impossible. There are also two strangers from Namibia, Hans and Mary Raumt  usch, husband and wife. And Arthur Schwan, who may have phoned your secretary ; he's German.
- That's right.
- You'll recognize him at once : he is quite old, 78, a little big and bald. Then there is Ashley Rockwell. She's a Canadian qualified nurse, with thick blond hair. She's pretty and very kind. Finally there is Johann Hering, who is German too. You'll also recognize him at once because of his very thin figure, and his pale sickly skin. He's not fine at the moment, he often feels sick. And that's all.
- *  Excelente ! Perfecto.* Thank you very much for all this information, it will certainly help

He then drew another picture, but this time of the place : the mansion, the garden, the fountain, the traces... He was creating a kind of a map for the case.

IV

« So, Mr Castellanos, have you found, discovered anything helpful ? »

The man who was speaking was Hans Raumlös. The guests, the owners and the investigator were having dinner at that moment, and the inspector was concentrating on the case. He answered him slowly, looking at everybody, though :

« I am sorry, Mr Raumlös, but I prefer not to answer your question now. I hope you understand what I mean. I am only able to say that the culprit is definitely among the guests who were there yesterday, that's all.

- Oh, yes, I understand, *I* must apologize, Mr Raumlös said.

- All right, don't say anything else, then, his wife gently added.

- Oh, how mysterious it is, miss Rockwell said, screwing up her eyes. It gives me thrills !

- Thank you, ended the inspector. » He then stood up and said :

« Now, if you will excuse me, I have to go to the toilets, I know where they are. I'll try not to be long. »

This last sentence was, of course, hypocritical. He left the dining-room, but went upstairs to investigate. Brad Montgomery had lent him the keys to the rooms and taught him which one opened which room.

When Castellanos went downstairs, around half an hour later, he had not noticed anything important except of one thing. One single key-clue.

V

On the following day, in the afternoon, the detective asked everybody to gather round in the living-room.

« You've been very fast to solve the case, *monsieur*, Brett and Brad Montgomery told him.

- Wasn't I, *señor* ? he answered both of them. »

After everyone had sat around Sebastian Castellanos, he began :

« Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please. I want you to listen to me quietly and calmly and not to interrupt me until I ask you something.

Well. First of all, I want to exonerate *señor* Schwan, whose walk is too slow and irregular to murder one person. Same thing for *señor* Hering, who is too weak, because of his illness. Then, I have to exculpate all women from the murder ; indeed, the footprint I saw yesterday while I was investigating allows me to say this, but only for the murder. Every woman here wears stiletto heels, and I know that everyone has only one pair of shoes, which they wear all day long, and I know that the Montgomerys had taken all their shoes from the mansion with them for their trip, so the murderer couldn't have taken another pair of shoes. Then, this footprint leads me to an anxious person with a forbidding face, the brother of the killed woman, and this man is you, Philip Lennon ! »

Philip leapt from his chair and yelled :

« How dare you ? What are you saying ? Impossible ! Do you really believe I could've murdered my own sister, and her lover ? It's just impossible, I'm not a criminal !

- Calm down, *señor*, the investigator said, and go back to your seat. Let me please finish my demonstration. No-one may mislead Sebastian Castellanos. Yes, you did it ! On top of that, you're dishonest ! And do you know why ? I have found a black coat, in *señor* Hering's bedroom, thrown under his bed. However *señor* Hering doesn't wear black clothes, but always white or yellow clothes. You are actually the only person who wears black here. It is strange, by the way, to wear a black coat during a cheerful party, isn't it ? So, first clue, the black coat belongs to you ! Nevertheless, what is on the right sleeve of the coat, when *señor* Hering wrote a letter yesterday, probably to his family, with his left hand, which confirms

that it's not his ? On the right sleeve are water and blood spots ! Second important clue ! I measured the size of the footprint, and also the size of your foot, *señor* Lennon, under the table, while I was pretending I had dropped my fork. The two sizes are equal, third clue ! » While inspector Castellanos was speaking, Philip Lennon was feeling extremely bad, he was holding his head in his hands, and his wife was murmuring to his ear :

« Come on ! It will be more dignified for you and for us if you say that...

- No, I can't, it's impossible. No ! answered her husband.

- Tell him everything !

- The traces of water, Castellanos went on, which I discovered near the fountain, led to the door of the dining-room, behind this door is a door-mat, and there is a little wet mud on it, as well as on your right shoe : the culprit has trodden on some mud. Fourth clue ! Why water tracks ? You may guess it was to clean the coat after it had been spotted with blood. And that's why it was a little wet when I found it in *señor* Hering's bedroom ! Fifth clue !

- Enough ! A woman interrupted, shouting. All that is true ! »

Everybody looked at her. Kate Tunner had suddenly stood up. Her husband was staring at her, and seemed very scared. He was weeping and sweating.

« My husband, Mrs Tunner said, this coward, doesn't want to admit the truth, so I'll tell you everything. It had all been planned, since the beginning. Congratulations, well done, Mr Castellanos, you are a real sleuth ! Philip had to kill Lara and William, because I am neither fast nor agile enough to do it myself. But he is much too sensitive, and too afraid of everything.

- He had to, and he has killed his own sister, all the same, Brett Montgomery said.

- I didn't like her at all, Philip answered, his voice shaking.

- And so he accepted, Kate grumbled. I know he shouldn't have done it. If he hadn't, our revenge wouldn't have been carried out, but at least our honour would have been intact. But his clumsiness won and here we are today !

- You said « your revenge » ? asked Sebastian Castellanos.

- Exactly ! she answered. I wanted him to murder the two young lovers, first because they were becoming proud of themselves. Too much : arrogant. And besides, their selfishness prevented us from solving our problems, and from being happy as well ! Second, because Philip and I have always been jealous of their perfect love and happiness. My marriage with Philip is a failure, a mistake. I demanded satisfaction. I bitterly regret all that. You now know everything.

- Well, not really everything, *señora* Tunner. Now *señor* Lennon, it's your turn ! Tell me what happened during the assassination, Castellanos asked. »

Philip Lennon was deeply, sincerely crying at that moment. His voice was quite broken, however he said :

« Very well. I came near the fountain, because I knew William and Lara were rendezvousing there. It was at 9:00 p.m. so I was very cold, in spite of my coat. When my sister and his fiancé came, at about 9:30, I was hiding behind a bush, I was telling myself I couldn't do that ; I was about to turn back silently when William told Lara : « What a lovely evening. What a chance your boring brother is not there to spy on us again. He is such a pain, as well as my sister. » My sister immediately confirmed, adding that she didn't care at all about our unhappiness. From that moment, my determination and my anger exploded. I knew that I wasn't liked by anyone, not even by my own sister. I leapt on William and I very cleanly stabbed his throat, I am sure he didn't suffer one single second. But my sister started to scream and to run away, so I didn't have the choice. I threw my knife to her neck, and it hit her just under the chin, fortunately for me, that's what I was thinking at the moment. She

fell down at once. I then managed to catch up with her, to pick up the knife and to kill her. My fingers were trembling so it took three clumsy stabs to make sure she was dead. Oh ! How horrible and bloody it was ! I prevented myself from crying or even from shedding tears, and I sat on the ground, with my eyes closed. Later, I decided to stand up and to hide the corpses. I quickly hid them, stretching them out into the bushes. Then I decided to wash my coat with the water from the fountain, but the spots were too dry, and I went into a panic. I should've thrown the coat away, but I just ran into the house, and probably also into mud, I burst into the dining-room. Fortunately, people don't spend much time in there after dinner, so it was empty. I checked everyone was on the ground-floor, I went upstairs, then to a room at random, put the bloody coat under the bed which was in it, and I reached mine. There, I cried... »

Mr Lennon's voice died. But after a dozen quiet seconds, the man suddenly became mad, stood up and shouted :

« Now, kill me ! I'm the next one on the list ! Catch me, sir detective, catch me and strangle me, quickly, please ! If you don't do so, I'll strangle myself with my bare hands ! I don't want to live as a killer ! Please ! »

Castellanos went close to him and violently smacked his face. He fell on his chair, rubbed his cheek and said dully :

« Thank you so much, inspector.

- I am sorry but you are a murderer, *señor*, Castellanos said. But however I think you'll first have to be carried to a psychiatric hospital, where you will be taken care of.

- Anyway, Mr Castellanos, I am the main person responsible for this murder. I gave Philip advice and orders, and I convinced him to commit it. Imprison me, as long as you want, but don't do the same for my dear husband, that is all I ask you, Kate Tunner sadly declared. He is innocent. »

She then started to weep.

VI

On the train returning home, Laetitia Winston asked Sebastian Castellanos :

« And so, what do you think about the case ?

- Strange, very strange and interesting, even fascinating, he answered.

- And why ?

- Well, because, as I was about to leave (you were already on the train at that moment, at the station), I got a message from *señor* Hering, that told me : « Thank you for everything, Mr Castellanos. The coat under the bed in my bedroom was very strange to me, I could not understand the reason for its presence there. Now I can give it back to its owner, and so I feel much better. » *¡Eso es muy curioso !* »